公爵令嬢の嗜み（たしな）

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Common Sense of a Duke’s Daughter - Chapter 1

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Although it’s a bad ending

…It hurts.

The first thing she felt was the pain. Up until that moment of time, she was still in her slumber, and it was the pain and drowsiness that awaken “this one.”

…Even if it was just a little, she wanted to wake up earlier.

She was thrown into the ground in front of many people, and there were a number of men who were holding her down. Even if she wasn’t a girl, anyone would start to struggle.

If this is a kidnapping, maybe a Prince riding a white horse will come and save her… but what kind of sweet dream was she dreaming about. This place is the “place of her condemnation.” Other than the victim, there is no way a perpetrator like herself would have any salvation.

By the way, since this situation was one she, herself, created, let this one explain how this came to be.

My name is Iris. Iris Lana Armelia. The first child of a Duke, Duke Armelia of Tasmeria Kingdom. A blooming young lady who’s currently 16 years of age. Father is the Prime Minister, and Mother, being a daughter of a General, also has parents with superior lineage. I am a bona fide young lady [ojou-sama], and in this Kingdom, my lineage only comes second to the Royal Family.

As for why I have been speaking in third person… it’s because “I” am a different human being. To be precise, right now, Iris’ personality and “mine” have fused together.

Speaking of Iris… She is the other half of my person, an ordinary woman who used to used to work in a country called “Japan” before dying at the age of 30. That day, I was working really late at night, died in an accident right after work, and awoke from the pain just a while ago.

However, just a few moments ago, I had been living as her with no recollection of my previous life, until her personality and my own had fused together… That’s how it is. … However, because of the present state of thing, I probably cannot afford to take it easy.

Well, now that she and “myself” had fused as one, I looked back at the memories I had of my past life and recalled something. …Is this world not the same game I was playing back then!? That’s what I thought.

When one lives only for her work, she has no spare time to fall in love! Although that’s what I thought, I still had a maiden’s mind and wanted to experience the thrill. Because I was like that, I was superbly addicted to otome games in my previous life.

At breaks and at night; during those times, I would always play those games to heal myself. Not good, not good. It’s not about that… Right now, this world looks exactly the same as the game I was playing in my previous life.

The title of the game was “You are my Princess [Kimi wa boku no Princess],” KimiPri for

short. The story took place in a world similar to Europe during the Middle Ages, with the female protagonist being the daughter of a noble at the bottom of the ladder of aristocracy, a Baron, in a school where the children of the aristocracy — including the upper echelon — gathers, and a Cinderella story unfolds… or so to say, it was something common.

The capture targets were: the Second Prince, the son of the Knight's General, the Prime Minister's son, and the son of the Pope of the Darryl religion. Their character template is exactly the same as the story and is as follows: overly self-confident, hot-blooded, cool, and mysterious.

Now then, in these kinds of stories, of course, a rival character also exist. And she is the fiancée of the Second Prince, Edward Tom Tasmeria, also the daughter of a Duke, in other words, me.

If the player character, the daughter of a Baron, chooses Edward as her target, his fiancée, in the pursuit of interfering with their relationship, is spiteful towards her.

Although she is a daughter of an aristocrat, she is still, after all, a young girl… Speaking of something she did to be spiteful, well, it was slander and harassment at school. When I was the player character, the rival character was her, and there were a few times where I did find her quite obnoxious… During the ending of the route, she was imprisoned by the Church of Darryl before returning home to be placed under house confinement. "There's no need to go that far…" That kind of sympathetic feeling occurred in me.

I mean, if one gives it some consideration, the player approached the capture target who already has a fiancée and had an illicit love affair with him… Normally, wouldn't you think that the heroine is the bad guy in this situation? No matter who it is, they would hate such a person, and they would think what Iris did is pretty cute.

…With that said, in these kind situations, no one would listen to such explanations. There is not a single ally, it is a completely helpless condition.

I have already reached the end of the game, dragged and surrounded in a certain place by the good-looking guys and the protagonist to be convicted.

…Or rather, when reincarnation usually happens, wasn't it the norm for a person to recall their past life during infancy? Like this, no matter how hard I try from now on, I'm already checkmated on the board.

“If you have any excuse, let’s hear it now, Iris. Regarding all the times you’ve harassed Yuri.”

The sound of Ed’s pained voice resounded in the area. He was looking down with eyes full of scorn.

“…Can you let go of me?”

I spoke to the guy who was holding me down, but he ignored my words. The son of the Knight Leader, Dorsen Katabelia, is really strong, and the place on my shoulder where he was touching hurts.

Dorsen ignored my words and strengthened the hold on my shoulder instead.

“It hurts, so let me go. …You, the son of the one who serves as the Knight Leader, Druna-sama, who is supposed to wield his power for the sake of the weak; to think you would do something like using brute force to hold down a weak girl.”

When I said that, he showed some reaction by twitching. As I thought, no matter where it is, the schooling of the Knights are the same.

“…You, a weak girl? Please stop joking and think about what you’re saying carefully.”

And the person who was laughing through his nose while he said that was my brother, Berne Tashi Armelia. Ah, the way he’s looking at me, it doesn’t seem like he thinks of me as his Sister, and the way he’s smiling sarcastically really annoys me.

That said… although it’s frustrating, because I’ve already been checkmated on this board, there’s no other choice but to intentionally make a bad move.

“…It is true that I did harass the daughter of the Baron, Yuri Noir. I admit it.”

“…You sure did admit it quite readily, didn’t you?”

“That’s right. Because it is obvious that everyone in this place already knows what had happened, I thought of spare you of your time. Consider it as my good faith.”

“…You, why did you harass her…!”

“…Why are you asking ‘why’…”

Ed was enraged in an instant. I wonder if I can remember it… No, the memory I have regarding the protagonist had deteriorated because of all the love and romance filling Iris’ brain. Surely, all the memories she has about her has been altered and interpreted out of her own convenience.

Common Sense of a Duke’s Daughter - Chapter 2

Love cools down

…I can’t associate myself with such farce any longer. After all, this is the part where Ed and his merry companions would try and vent their frustrations. The part where they justify her as the victim. If I don’t avoid that scenario, I won’t be able to escape being under house arrest… There’s already nothing left for me to do in this place.

The more important thing is whether or not I can avoid being imprisoned by the church… However, that has to be negotiated with Father. Once again, I repeat, there’s nothing left for me to do in this place.

“…Since I will not be able to meet everyone from now onwards, I will take this opportunity to say my farewells. Everyone, thank very much for everything so far. To be able to attend this academy with all the other students, and to those who had treated me well, you have my sincere gratitude. Farewell, everyone.”

Since I probably will not have a chance to go out into polite society in the future. I probably won’t need to come back to this academy.

“Iris, wait…!”

After finishing with a pleasant feeling, I wanted to leave this place but Ed detained me. He can’t read the atmosphere, can he… I wonder, how did “I” come to like this kind of man.

“Before you leave, apologize to Yuri.”

Seriously~ I really wonder why did I’ve come to like this kind of guy for a period of time? Ah, on the other hand… I think I’ve misheard it, but I seemed to have heard something strange.

I, a daughter of a Duke, apologize to a daughter of a Baron in front of everyone? I really wanted to voice this question loudly.

…I’m not saying this just because resentfulness or pride. However, daughters are nevertheless daughters. How I conduct myself will highly reflect upon our Ducal House, which has great influence among the aristocracy.

In other words, when I apologize, it will be comparable to Armelia House bowing to the Baron House. It is unprecedented for someone from a Ducal House to bow to someone from a Baron House.

Not only does it affect our house, it will also affect the Houses of Marquises and Earls. When a new aristocrat grows impudent, it is possible that a situation where the power balance of the aristocrats will collapse… Haahhh, his brain has seriously become filled with nothing but love.

In the first place, is that something you should say to your former fiancee? Place your hand over your chest and think about it clearly! …Consider the situation well, in this place, it’s not just me, but there are also many curious spectators… Although it seemed like there are students here who had no connection whatsoever, there were some who had

somewhat soft eyes when they were looking at me. Or rather, I felt their sympathy being directed towards me.

…I might be able to get away from this place now.

“…I will not apologize. As for the things I did, I did them with dignity and self-respect. Even if it leads to the complete destruction of this body in the future, I will not yield.”

I was resolute when I did those things, was what I wanted to implicate.

“…Yuri-sama. I wonder if you’re still going to continue to deprive me any further. My fiance, my position…”

Here, I let my tears flow down. The feeling of a tragic heroine. Oh, with the turn of events, pleasant feelings were directed towards me. Although I was treated as the villain a little while ago, right now I am the victim.

“That said, I am who I am, and there are some things I won’t let go of. Pride is one of them. If I apologize, it will be identical to agreeing to trample over myself. Therefore, I will not apologize. I will not allow you take anything away from my any further.”

I’ve declared it all… Ah, I feel refreshed. While feeling refreshed and cheerful, I left the place. The expression on Ed’s face remained somewhat dissatisfied. On the other hand, the heroine had a blank look on her face and a question mark above her head, as though there was nothing but a bed of flowers inside her brain.

After I stepped away from that place, I have reached the outskirts of the academy ground. …Although it might be a little odd, I trusted my good younger brother to make the preparations. As I expected, my younger brother had already contacted the house to have someone pick me up.

I boarded the luxurious carriage alone. …As for my luggage, the house will probably arrange for it to be brought back or disposed of.

With this, I guess it’s farewell to the academy. Besides, I have no more reason to come here. According to the story, apart from being confined and deprived of my social status, there were also other results. Because Father wants me away from the academy.

Fuu… I blew out a sigh. The farce has ended… The story only reached up to this point. After this, there is no longer an outline. Above all, the next part is to have a face-to-face meeting with the “Last Boss,” my father. To be frank, I’ve been feeling quite tense since while back.

While the carriage continued its way towards the Armelia residence in the Royal City, the atmosphere inside the carriage became heavier and heavier.

Common Sense of a Duke’s Daughter - Chapter 3

The Villainess Daughter at Home

The residence of the Duke of Armelia… In our house here in the Royal City is where father, who cannot leave the Royal City due to his job title of being the Prime Minister, and mother, who likes sticking with him, lives. And because of that, the house was unexpectedly luxurious. Judging from the knowledge of my previous life, the house is more than large enough to be considered as a mansion.

Upon entering the house, the first thing I did was head to my room. And then I sat down on a chair to calm my heart. After all, I'll be having a face-to-face meeting with the "Last Boss." I want to relieve some tension.

"…Young mistress…!"

"…Oh, Tanya. I'm home."

Entering the room filled with tears was my maidservant, Tanya. Despite being a commoner, she has perfect manners, and at the same time, she also has beautiful features.

"How can you stay so composed…! As for me, I'm so vexed and frustrated…"

When I see her looking ragged while shedding tears, it really warms my heart. But at the same time, I feel really apologetic for causing her inexcusable worries.

The commoner, Tanya… is a girl whom I picked up from somewhere generally known as "the slum" when I went to town incognito. It was a time when I felt the heavy weight of having title "the child of a Duke." It wasn't just at home but even amongst the aristocratic circle. The other parties found it difficult to speak to me with ease because of my lineage. When I went to town, I found her lying on the side of the road. While thinking, "Maybe if it's this child, she can become my conversational partner…" and calculatedly picked her up. She, however, since that time, felt really thankful and decided to serve me very, very well.

If you ask me, it isn't an exaggeration to say that Tanya is family.

"Please calm down, Tanya. It is still not the right time to wallow in sorrow and cry."

"…It is as you say. Please pardon me. As for Master, it seems like he will be returning in the evening."

Tanya has a good head on her shoulders. In addition, she can also cope with any situation immediately. Even now, I wonder what happened to all her tears, she has already regained her composure.

"…Is that so. Well then, could you please bring me a drink to relax with?"

"As you wish."

"…Tanya."

"What is it?"

"…Thank you."

“It might be presumptuous of me, young mistress. However, I do not serve the Ducal House of Armelia, but rather, I serve the young mistress, is what I think. Therefore, even if it’s someone part of the royal family, I will never forgive Edward-sama who betrayed young mistress. As for young mistress’ meeting with the Master, I will be behind young mistress all the way as your ally.”

“How fortunate I am.”

“No, it is I who is. Also, I’m not the only person in this house who feels the same way, young mistress, so please do not forget it.”

That right. In fact, in addition to Tanya, I have picked up others. I was considerably strange while I was growing up. Back then, instead of getting presents, I asked to pick up children who, like Tanya, have no relatives and wanted those kids to stay by my side… This was something I begged my parents to do.

The scary thing was, it was cheaper to feed commoner children than receiving a gift. My parents reluctantly agreed, and every year, a child without relatives who was the same age as I would be picked up. This was not introduced in the game’s setting. If I was affected by the memories of my previous life sooner, I might not have remembered this at all.

When I was talking to them, I was able to forget for a moment that I was a daughter of a Duke, and it was a precious time for me. However, as years slowly went by, the pressure from the surroundings expressed that it wasn’t appropriate not to clearly establish our standings. Although the relationship between us are similar my relationship with Tanya — Master and Servant — they are nevertheless very special to me.

“…However, Tanya. Please put your own happiness first before anything else.”

When she heard my words, Tanya had a dubious expression on her face. No, in actuality, she’s pretty much expressionless… However, having spent a really long time with her, I can pretty much guess what she’s feeling.

“Because of my willfulness, I ended up dragging you guys into a destitute world. At any time, if any of you desire it, you may be free from all this and I will not oppose. Or rather, when I think about what lies in the future, this would be for the best…”

“Young mistress, please do not say any further than you already have.”

Unexpectedly, Tanya interrupted my words.

“I would have died at that time. And it was young mistress who saved me from that situation. From then on, my life belonged to you. The only time I will leave your side is when either this life of mine has come to an end… or when you decide that you no longer need me.”

“Goodness. If that’s the case, then I suppose you will never be able to leave my side unless you die, Tanya”

“I wonder if there is any greater happiness than this.”

“…I completely understand how you feel now. As I thought, I really am a very fortunate person. However, Tanya. There is more than one way to be happy. That’s why you shouldn’t forget what I’ve said earlier.”

“…If that is what the young mistress wants.”

Although reluctantly, Tanya nodded her head. …As I thought, if it ends up being the “church imprisonment and status deprivation” route, I do not want Tanya to go with me. Just to this extent, because it’s necessary.

However, in this condition, it seems like she’ll follow anyway… Haahhh~ As I thought, I should somehow try to get an upper hand on father.

With a new determination, I drank the tea Tanya served. …Yup, it’s delicious.

“…Young mistress.”

When the atmosphere in the room calmed down, a different servant knocked on the door.

“Please, come in.”

“…Please excuse me.”

The person who came in was the head maid, Rimé. Wearing stylish maid clothing without a single opening, giving an impression that she is the real thing.

“…Young mistress. The Master has called for you.”

“Oh, it’s time already? If I’m not mistaken, father doesn’t return usually return unless it’s nighttime…”

“Because of the matter regarding young mistress, he seemed to have returned as soon as possible.”

“…Really…”

Fuu, I spat out a sigh. Ah, where did the vow I made earlier go… Somehow, it seems like my stomach is doing flip-flops.

“…Although it’s impudent of me, young mistress. Regarding the current situation, I think that young mistress is faultless.”

Because the usually strict Rimé unexpectedly made a supportive declaration, my eyes involuntarily widened with surprise.

“Everyone in this mansion is an ally of the young mistress. Therefore, please meet with Master with a dignified appearance.”

…In the story, Iris had been portrayed as a villain. But in actuality, Iris had built a good relationship with all the people in the house. Naturally, it didn’t matter whether they were nobles or commoners. …In other words, because of how much she was madly in love with Edward, she was driven by jealousy and held the heroine of the story, the daughter of a Baron, in contempt and made it a habit of slandering her.

Let me say it again, I sympathize with Iris… Or rather, this won’t do. I am Iris now. Even if it’s just for my sake, I must make Iris happy.

Now that I’ve prepared myself as much as possible, Rimé led me to father’s study. And behind me was Tanya who came along.

“…Well then, young mistress.”

“Yes, thank you. Rimé. And Tanya, please wait for me here.”

“As you wish.”

Now then, I’ve reached the battleground.

Standing before the massive door, I swallowed my saliva and took a deep breath… and then I knocked.

Common Sense of a Duke’s Daughter - Chapter 4

Confrontation

“…Enter.”

“Please excuse me.”

While a solemn atmosphere filled the room, I sat down right in front of father. With a clever countenance befitting of someone with a job title as the Prime Minister, in addition to the sharp glint in eyes which he usually dons while working, making the atmosphere around him even heavier… And now, since it seems like it has increased to about twice the usual, it made me feel like running away.

“…I apologize for taking much of your time today.”

“Heehh. So you do understand that point at the very least.”

“Not at all.”

Although it was subtle, a vein on father’s face twitched a little… or so it seems. That’s why I said, it’s really scary.

“Whether if it’s regarding father’s position as the Prime Minister or as your title of being a Duke, I do not think I’ve caused father any trouble. What I’m apologizing for is because father [chichi] is my father [otou-sama].”

“Is that so…? And why is that?”

“In the first place, I only caused a rumor to spread out of mischief. There’s also the issue of circumstantial evidence, so I don’t think it’ll affect father’s position as the Prime Minister… Above all, our side belongs to a Ducal House, and it will not fall to ruination just because of an engagement gone wrong. Even in the academy, I handled things in a way that they were sympathetic towards me. This way, they cannot make a big problem out of it. No matter how much clamor Edward-sama makes, it will only end up with a strict reprimand.”

“…About what happened inside the academy, I’ve already heard about it.”

“I have figured as much. And also, I apologize for saying this to father, the Duke… But in the first place, wasn’t father opposed the engagement between Edward-sama and myself?”

“Why, that’s right.”

“Because of my lineage, if it gets connected to the royal family through marriage, it might destroy the power balance of the royal family. Besides, apart from having a Duke and the Prime Minister father, mother is also the daughter of the General. It will still be acceptable if a marriage is formed with the First Prince. However, with the Second Prince, sooner or later, the Kingdom will be split into two.”

After listening to my words, for the first time since I arrived, father smiled… That said, it was one of those evil upward smiles along with sound effects that makes one feel nauseated… Although the person in question probably doesn’t have that intention…

Therefore, as I thought, I feel really scared.

“If that’s the case, why do you think I allowed your engagement with Edward-sama to happen?”

About this question, I also thought about it considerably on my way here. If the situation calls for it, I would have definitely picked the former.

“…Because either one of them would be fine?”

“Exactly what do you mean by that?”

“Because if I got engaged to the First Prince, then young brother will also serve him and the First Prince’s position will be firm. If my fiance is the Second Prince, younger brother will be in the First Prince’s faction. In that situation, I will be in charge of watching over the Second Prince to observe if he makes any unusual movements. Well… the former will probably take no time and effort, and truthfully, it’s simpler, it would have been better for father.”

Actually, the story in the game didn’t delve much into the story of the First Prince. Instead, it was depicted that the Second Prince will become the next King. It is actually quite common that the First Prince is the child of the dead legal wife while the Second Prince is the child of the current concubine. One would think that the First Prince will naturally become King even while he’s still in his mother’s womb, but reality is not as easy as that.

The current concubine is a daughter of a Marquis, a House that’s currently in the process of building up their strength, whereas the legal wife was a daughter of an Earl. Thus, when one looks at their family status, the legal wife’s House is inferior to the concubine’s. The King unexpectedly fell in love with the legal wife and used brute force to abolish all objection to making her his Queen, resulting in the current delicate balance.

And the aristocratic society who created that delicate balance are currently swaying and shaking, visible to the eye.

Inside the game, this kind of unpleasant situation was not portrayed. Even at the very end, the game had established that the First Prince was studying in another country. That’s how it was supposed to be, so I didn’t expect it to be this bad. But as expected, reality is harsh.

As for father, it’s not inaccurate to say that he is serving the country and not the royal family. Serving as the Prime Minister, he is keeping a neutral position in the royal family’s dispute. For example, if the situation was connected to the First Prince’s faction, based on the law of the Kingdom, it is likely that he will be judged as inconsequential to the Kingdom and be cast away… If the royal family were to ever fight against each other, the government of the Kingdom will halt. If one thinks about it, it was the right decision.

“Nevertheless, younger brother is completely leaning against the Second Prince. Since that’s the case, father should have been aiming for the annulment of my engagement with the Second Prince. I’m delighted for you, father.”

Since that’s the case, when it comes to my affair, if it’s father, he probably wouldn’t disinherit me. If it’s just that much power, our House also has it. I implied that I did what I did because it was something that father desired.

“HAHAhahaha.”

Father laughed looking really happy. However, even though he was laughing, I can only see him as a villain. If a third party sees him, they’ll probably disintegrate completely.

“That’s right. Certainly, I did wish to have your engagement with the Second Prince annulled. Although I have instructed to keep distance from the Second Prince in case of a disaster… But that guy, he has completely forgotten his duty and is now thoroughly part of the Second Prince’s circle… However, are you fine with this, Iris? Did you not fall in love with the Second Prince?”

“Love is something like a sickness. When it cools down, that’s the end of it… Even I, myself, think that it’s a good thing it happened earlier rather than later.”

Besides, love of a hundred years will probably cool down as well.

“…Hmmm. However, Iris. This time, the current predicament is your blunder. Therefore, it is necessary that I take some measures.”

“…Is that so…”

As I thought, I couldn’t escape the “deprivation of social status, church confinement, and disownment” course… In addition, Tanya seemed adamant that she comes along, I need to somehow convince her to stay.

“I’ll have you go back to the territory and then be under house confinement. Of course, since you’ll be far away from the Royal City, what you want to do in that remote place doesn’t concern me.”

“…Eh?”

Doesn’t that mean that anything I want to do will be “okay,” and there won’t be any confinement?

“Also, it’ll be a waste if you just stay there and do nothing. Because I will be giving you the ‘Feudal Lord Representative’ position, so at the very least, govern the territory properly.”

* * *

Common Sense of a Duke’s Daughter - Chapter 5

The Heart of a Parent, the Child knows not

Feudal Lord Representative? …In other words, to govern the territory in place of father.

I wonder what I should say in this situation… Having an unexpected piece of good luck? Casting pearls before swine? Ah, either one of those are incorrect! Because it happened so suddenly, I couldn't find any words to make sense out of it.

"…Feudal Lord Representative, wouldn't that role usually go to younger brother who is the heir?"

"It doesn't matter since you'll be going to the territory anyway. And besides, that guy is currently experiencing the 'illness' you spoke of."

…Well, certainly. In order to experience being in love with the Baron's daughter, Yuri, it is necessary for him not to distant himself from the Second Prince, but rather be part of his entourage.

If he stays in the Royal City, since it's long vacation, a "kyaa kyaa, fufufu" development will definitely happen… Because she now belongs to the Second Prince, it should be fine if he distanced himself. In my brother's mind, he probably wants to be in a position where he can protect the happiness of the person he loves and watch over her.

"…I shall comply. I'll show you a territory that will not quiver 'no matter what state' the Royal City ends up becoming."

When I said that, father nodded in acknowledgment and made a 'you may retire' gesture, and I left the room.

* * *

My name is Louis Dan Armelia. The Duke of Armelia, and also the current Prime Minister.

Now then, various surprising things occurred today.

First of all, my daughter, Iris, was expelled from school and had her engagement annulled… To me, this is a route which I had predetermined.

Besides, I was originally against it, and now I was able to prevent my daughter from doing so. However, I didn't agree to let her get engaged… just so it can be annulled like this.

On the contrary, even if my daughter didn't do anything foolish, I would have canceled her engagement by claiming she's ill. In any case, I intended to have her be confined by the church before stepping in and removing her from the aristocratic society.

…In the first place, my daughter fell madly in love with Edward, the Second Prince, so she probably won't listen to anything I say, so this works out fine. That's what I thought.

However, when I finally met with my daughter, instead of looking humiliated as a result of being separated from the man she loves, she looked calm and refreshed. In addition, she splendidly executed my plans.

…How interesting. That’s what I thought.

Because of my work, I didn’t have much time to interact with my son and daughter, and the both of them were spoiled by my wife. As for my daughter, she grew up to be a typical noble who couldn’t do anything by herself.

On the other hand, my son grew up to be one of those youngsters who were overconfident in their abilities, lovestruck, and naive… And when he starts working in the Royal City, I planned on thoroughly disciplining him.

But that aside, when that same daughter of mine spoke with me, as though she had some sort of enlightenment, executed what I had planned beautifully… The sad part of it all is, compared to my son, she has the ability to discern the flow of society. Furthermore, she is able to make minute decisions.

It was as if she had turned into a completely different person. Now that I think about it, this child will occasionally perform strange things, and while listening to her, it made me recall those times. The most extreme occasion was when she asked for commoners to be picked up and have them by her side.

Instead of getting expensive presents, she chose to have commoner children be picked up to stay by her side… I thought she was going to make them her protégé. But when I finally approved of it, she didn’t seem to have that kind of plan.

I thought that my daughter’s phase of strange behaviors had ended… but when I looked at her expression earlier, she had the same look as before.

It is a waste not to put her to use. Before I knew it, I had already given her the position, “Feudal Lord Representative.” I thought it was rather whimsical of me if I do say so myself. However, since Sebastian is currently living in that territory, she’ll probably not do anything strange early on. Nevertheless, if Iris does perpetrate something, it’ll be amusing to see.

All except for one thing. She wasn’t able to guess one correctly. And that is the approval of her engagement to the Second Prince…

As the Prime Minister, I thought it would have been better for her to get engaged to the First Prince. The only reason I agreed to her engagement with the Second Prince was because it was my daughter’s wish.

After all, I’m also just a man. A father who wants to spoil his daughter. And so, under the pretext of her keeping an eye on the Second Prince, I agreed to her engagement. Then… after my daughter’s engagement was decided, in order for the royal family not to have disputes, I adjusted to a neutral stance.

Though, I cannot say anything about my son. Since he’s overconfident in his abilities, he should do something on his own.

…However, under the surface, I wish that royal family’s dispute over the throne intensifies. Sooner or later, my daughter would have been thrown in the maelstrom of the dispute. It was beyond my expectation that my daughter was able to get out of it on her own.

Therefore, I judged that it was best for her to withdraw from the aristocratic society until things had calmed down. Of course, if she had any difficulties, I had every intention of helping her.

But when I looked at her appearance today, she doesn’t need my help, only my protection.

On the contrary, she demonstrated that she had the potential to sail through the rough seas alone.

…I wonder what kind of move will she make. While thinking about it, I find myself looking forward to the future.

Common Sense of a Duke’s Daughter - Chapter 6

Reality

…Good morning.

Now then, I, Iris, after receiving instructions from father, have moved to the Armelia territory. Today is the first day. The morning sun is dazzling, illuminating the territory.

As for what I'm doing so early in the morning, I'm practicing yoga. The first thing I did in the morning after waking up is to exercise, and more importantly, it's good for the health. …Well, not quite. My body is a little chubby, you see. Because of my status of being a daughter of a Duke, I tend to eat luxurious and high-calorie meals as much as I desired, so it's natural for me to gain weight. And because of that, I decided on going on a diet and work hard in the mornings.

"Good morning, young mistress. …eh, kyaaa!"

"…Oh, Tanya. Good morning."

I wonder why Tanya is so surprised? Ah, of course, Tanya also came to Armelia territory with me. I thought it was fine since it was not the "confinement route."

"Good morning, but that's not it. Young mistress, what on earth are you doing with that kind of appearance."

"This kind of appearance, you say…"

I looked at my own appearance. …Linen tunic and pants which I procured with the help of a maid. Don't you think it's the perfect clothing to wear while exercising?

"For the goodness of my health, I intend to exercise like this every morning. I chose clothes that are easy to move in, is it no good?"

"Young mistress, exercise?"

A dubious and suspicious expression filled Tanya's face. Certainly, a noble young lady exercising, I can't really imagine it.

"Yes. I read in a book that it's not good for one's health if one doesn't move their body. Because I intend to do this every morning, please do not be so surprised."

"I understand… Please excuse my impoliteness."

"It's fine… But because I perspired, could you please have a bath ready?"

"Of course."

After I got into the bath Tanya had prepared, I went and had breakfast. …Because I exercised, I ate a lot for breakfast. Of course, I made sure it was well balanced.

"…After this, I would like to speak to Sebastian. Could you please make an appointment?"

"Certainly."

The excellent Tanya immediately made an appointment with Sebastian, and the talk with him will take place before noon. Sebastian is a Steward and Butler of our House. Even when I say “butler,” he has been left to administer our territory substantially. In other words, a Super Butler.

When Sebastian entered the room, he somehow had the same smell as Rimé… In other words, he was dressed stylishly in a swallowtail coat. Even though he was moving briskly, he didn’t give the impression of someone in a hurry. Instead, his movements looked really beautiful… In addition to a head full of gray hair, his appearance is the definition of a dazzling butler.

“…You appear to be quite busy, I apologize for calling you in spite of your busy schedule.”

“Nay. By all rights, it should have been me who should have given you my greetings, I apologize.”

“Now then, without delay. Could you please gather and present to me the reports of the territory’s income and expenditures for the past three years?”

“I respectfully obey. However, what will you be doing with it?”

“I will be reading all of it, of course. I have, after all, accepted the “Feudal Lord Representative” position given by the Duke. However, although I’m ashamed to say this, I currently have no information on how the territory is being managed or the present situation. Therefore, can you please give me one month?”

“One month, you say?”

“Yes. Because it is necessary for me to read all the reports, and to also inspect the land.”

“Certainly. However, if you wish to inspect the land, it will take approximately one week in order to make necessary preparations.”

“This time, in order to grasp the present condition, I intend to do the inspection incognito. Therefore, I’ll only need the minimum number of people to accompany me. Because I can vouch for those members, I will not need to trouble Sebastian.”

“I asked a presumptuous question, I apologize.”

“Not at all. Although I will be managing the territory from now on, I will nevertheless give you an important position. So please feel free to give advises.”

After Sebastian left, I called for Tanya to come.

“Tanya. Could you please call Ryle and Dida, and Rehme as well?”

“Certainly.”

After several minutes, Tanya entered the room with three other people who were about the same age as I… In other words, they were also people whom I have picked up.

Ryle has beautiful blonde hair, looking like any other young nobleman. And although he has a physique inferior to the Kingdom’s Knights, he would not lose to them when it comes to a fight. Besides, he is more or less my bodyguard.

Dida, just like Ryle, serves as my bodyguard. Although he is a person who gets happy easily when praised or flattered and has an easy-going nature, his abilities are guaranteed.

Rehme is a girl who wears glasses and likes reading books. She currently serves as the

librarian at our House. Speaking of the Duke's library, it has a collection of precious books. When comparing to my previous world, the collection of books are in the scale of junior high school level and above. Thus, she finds her role very important.

"It's been a long time since we've met, everyone."

Because the three people weren't able to come with me to the Royal City to attend the academy, they stayed in the territory to work.

Although I told them that they were free to do as they wish… and that it was agreeable for them to leave the territory, I am glad they stayed and yet apologetic at the same.

"It's been a long time, our princess."

The one who answered first was Dida. He answered it in his usual easy-going manner while smiling.

"Dida. You're talking to Iris-sama in that tone again…"

"It's fine, Ryle. Everyone is like family to me. When there's no one else around, I'd be delighted if you guys spoke to me the same way as the old days."

"However, Iris-sama…"

"Please, Ryle."

"…I understand."

Ryle approved while blowing out a large sigh.

"As everyone already know, my engagement with Edward-sama has been annulled, and I have returned to this territory."

"I absolutely cannot accept it. Why was Iris-sama's engagement not only annulled, but must be confined to the house?"

Rehme was similar to Tanya. She was also crying in vexation. Although there's a gap between her personality and appearance, she always spoke in a leisurely manner.

"That's right. Indeed, he is a young master with a poor eyesight."

"Thank you. However, this matter has already been settled. Besides, I am ecstatic to be able to live together with everyone in this territory once again. …Now then, about the real issue at hand. As everyone know, I have been appointed as this territory's Feudal Lord Representative. And so, the first thing I want to do is inspect various places… Is everyone willing to accompany me?"

"I humbly accept."

"Princess' escort, huh~ It has a nice ring to it."

While two people showed their motivation, Rehme had a difficult expression on her face.

"The two of them escorts, so I understand. But what purpose do I have as a companion?"

"To put it simply, it's because I want your knowledge?"

"Eh?"

“If I’m not mistaken, you’ve extensively read every book available in the Duke’s library? There were also books about the local history and geography. I want the knowledge you’ve acquired from reading those books. Besides, it differs greatly when there’s prior knowledge while investigating various places.”

Our House really has an amazing collection of books. Apart from being a noble house, those books have been collected by generations of generations of Prime Ministers. Every single large room in this mansion has already been filled with books.

As for genre, there’s also a wide range of variety. Those books were, of course, collected based on the varying hobbies of different generations, such as Politics, Geography, Law, and various others. And since Rehme had already read through all of those books, I trust that she has immense knowledge.

“…If that’s the case, I understand. I will work hard to fulfill my duty.”

* * *

Common Sense of a Duke’s Daughter - Chapter 7

Studying

“The inspection is scheduled to take place in two days. If there’s anything you need, please look for Tanya and let her know respectively. Tanya. Please take care of the preparation.”

“I understand.”

“And also, is there anyone who can get in contact with Moneda?”

“Moneda, you say?”

“Yes, that’s right. If I’m not mistaken, he’s currently working for the Commerce Guild?”

The Commerce Guild is, as what the name implies, an organization that assembles stores. It is similar to the one Japan had during the Warring States period.

Moneda is also one of the children whom I picked up. But when I enrolled in the academy, he joined the Commerce Guild.

“Yes, and if I’m not mistaken, he’s currently in charge of accounts… I will definitely get in contact with him.”

“Then, Ryle. I’m counting on you to contact him. If possible, I’d like to have an appointment with him near the end of our itinerary.”

“I understand.”

After I broke down the details of our agenda during the inspection, the three people left. With perfect timing, Sebastian arrived with the documents I requested for earlier, and I started to read them.

As a matter of fact, I used to work at a tax office in Japan when I was still alive. Thanks to that, I became really skillful at reading reports on income and expenditures, and other related documents. I could follow the number trail without any problems.

“…Young mistress. It’s already time for lunch.”

“…Oh, my. It’s already that time?”

Time passed by rather quickly, and before I knew it, it was already time for lunch. Even so, I’m really thankful that someone had prepared it. To be honest, because I was so busy in my past life, I didn’t have the time to eat proper meals.

After eating my meal quickly, I immediately returned to work. …Ah, I chewed the food properly. I did not forget about dieting. Since I’m busy, it’ll be just right if I forget to eat.

* * *

My name is Tanya. I do not have a surname. A commoner, and because I used to be one of the residents of the slum, I never really cared about it.

Although I’m that kind of person, for some reason, I’m currently attending to the daughter of a Duke. For someone who was always distraught on what I will be eating and didn’t

know what tomorrow will bring, but for things to actually turn out like this… In the past, I never thought this would happen even in my wildest dreams.

The person whom I serve, young mistress Iris, is a young lady of noble birth. She is a lovely young woman who occasionally displays naivety.

If you ask me why a person like me is serving at one of the Kingdom's most eminent and distinguished family, it was because of the young mistress' whim. However, I am thankful for her whim. Although it was more than enough that she saved this life of mine from the verge of death…

But the young mistress said I was "important" and treats me like a friend, which I am grateful for. …Therefore, I want to serve the young mistress wholeheartedly. That's what I thought. The young mistress gave a trifling existence such as myself a reason to keeping living.

However, this time, my important young mistress' engagement was annulled by a hateful man.

That fellow part of the royal family is really hard to understand.

Although it was acceptable that he did not see the magnificence of young mistress, but he not only fell in love with a daughter of a Baron and neglected the daughter of a Duke, he also humiliated her in front of a large number of people which is outrageous. Unforgivable.

Nevertheless, when my important young mistress returned to the house, she already looked refreshed. Huh? And to think that you yearned for him exceedingly! And because it was something she wholeheartedly pursued, I wondered if there was something amiss… But when I thought about it, there was no reason for young mistress to have lingering affection or have regrets when it comes to that guy.

Because I do not know how Master will react to this incident, but when he had the free time, he had a meeting with the young mistress. Please do your best. Even if young mistress is sent to the ends of the world, it is my utmost wish to serve young mistress.

Fortunately, apart from being confined to the house in the territory, the young mistress was not reproved.

However, rather than being relieved, I was astonished at how quickly the incident was settled. …Young mistress, will be the Duke's Feudal Lord Representative?

Master as well, I wonder what in the world was on his mind. When I heard it, I even doubted my own ears.

My most important young mistress is an educated noble lady who would never disgrace the title of nobility. Although I have yet to see it in action, but when it comes down to it, I just have a hunch that that's just the case.

After all, young mistress' schedule since childhood emphasized on etiquette. And in the academy, it was Arithmetic, Poetry, Literature, History, Geography, and other general subjects.

And sure enough, the young mistress is able to accomplish anything…

She gave me instructions one after another, and she is presently reading the documents Sebastian had given to her.

When I briefly took a glance at one of the documents, my eyes were immediately clogged with numbers, but she, on the other hand, made me wonder if she was reading it really quickly.

Occasionally, she would write something down in a notebook, and I realized that she really wasreading it.

As I expected, compared to me, the young mistress is unfathomable. That’s what I thought.

However, because young mistress seemed too concentrated that she doesn’t notice the things around her, I vowed to get her to rest from time to time so she doesn’t overwork herself.

* * *

Common Sense of a Duke’s Daughter - Chapter 8

Scout

Within two days, I finished reading all the documents right in time before the inspection. Not just the big towns, but even those rustic villages.

Of course, I wouldn’t be able to inspect all the places. This time, the main goal is to visit the south where tax revenue has fallen in recent times, and the east where tax revenue is especially high.

I feel apologetic to Ryle and Dida, but our journey went smoothly without encountering thieves, so our inspection proceeded in an orderly manner. From time to time, I would ask Rehme about the villages to get a better grasp on the circumstances.

Like that, almost one month had gone by… and it was finally time for my appointment with Moneda. Truth be told, to me, my meeting with him is the first obstacle.

Our party was led to the Commerce Guild’s drawing room. Unlike drawing rooms of aristocrats, the interior design of the Commerce Guild’s drawing room was calming and profound instead of wasteful and luxurious. It’s probably because different people value things differently.

“It’s been a long time since we’ve met, Iris-sama.”

The person who entered the room was a refreshing looking young man wearing glasses… That said, whenever I see his smiling expression, it can’t be helped that I can only find him suspicious.

“It’s been a long time, Moneda. Ah, please do not stand on ceremony. Because I’m traveling incognito today.”

“No, this is just my way of doing things.”

“Is that so. You’ve certainly been like this since way back.”

“And so, how may I help you?”

Suddenly getting straight to business, huh. There was no place to have that heartwarming talk about old times… But then again, Moneda has always been like this since the olden days.

“Well, Moneda. Even though it’s been a long time since we last met. And so, how has Moneda been doing lately?”

“My current condition? Well, to put it simply, fairly well.”

“I thought as much. As expected of the Commerce Guild’s Vice Chief of Accounts. Since that’s the case, you are, of course, aware of my movements?”

“Well… That’s about right.”

A bitter smile floated across Moneda’s face. It is a characteristic of a Merchant to gather information as quickly as possible. It will be a big problem to do business without understanding the current happenings. In other words, they naturally know the movements of aristocrats and where they spend their money.

“As you know, because of what had recently occurred, I have returned to the territory. By the way, Moneda. How has the guild been doing these days?”

“That is also going well.”

“Hmm, is that so? Even though the commerce in the Royal City have decreased?”

With a snap, the peaceful expression he had until now froze.

“Well, that’s no good. If what you’re thinking reflects too much on your face, your will immediately be seen through by your business partner.”

Hohoho, while laughing like a typical young lady, I thought the peaceful atmosphere would return, but Moneda’s expression remained stiff.

“Moneda, I’m sorry about that. I was only asking questions to trick you. However, as I’ve said earlier, the commerce conducted in the Royal City have indeed decreased.”

As for why, it’s probably because the political situation in the Royal City is unstable. That said, it’s not as if it has reached a critical point. This is something I came to understand after consulting the account books day after day.

Incidentally, I was really just asking him questions to trick him without any other reason whatsoever. Now that the political situation has become more and more difficult to predict, it is inevitable to be extra cautious compared to before… And I’m not saying it in just a merchant’s point of view.

“…I’ve been done in. For reference, how did you come to that conclusion?”

“If you look at the present political situation, you’ll naturally come to understand it. That said, Moneda. I didn’t come all the way here just to be cruel to you.”

“And so, how can I help you?”

The flow of the conversation has been restored. But I felt like it differs from the one earlier. Although we started on equal grounds… I was the first to break out and grasp the advantage of the conversation. This time, however, the other side seized the initiative. But perhaps he might still listen to this little request of mine.

“Moneda. I was wondering if you’d like to be in charge of a larger amount of money.”

“A larger amount of money, you say? Are you trying to employ me for the House of the Duke?”

“Yes. However, I do not want to you serve the Ducal House, but rather, the Duke’s territory.”

“…That, exactly what to do you mean by that?”

“From now onwards, the Duke’s territory will be undergoing a reform. For one thing, the administration of our House will be divided between different people. In other words, I would like to ask you to manage the budget of this territory.”

“Why, did you choose me? I’m sure that the Duke’s House will are not lacking talented people.”

“It’s because you’re already familiar with the field. In addition, this reform will be carried out medium to long term. Because we will be pushing towards fundamental reform… knowledge is unnecessary right now. Although the basics are necessary to some extent… but for someone who is the current Vice Chief of Accounts, I’m sure you’ll do just fine. Above all, it’s because I know I can trust you. Trust, meaning that you will not be moved even when you’re bribed with money.”

“Hahaha, it has surprisingly turned into an impressive conversation. If what you say is true, I’m looking forward to what lies in the future territory of the Duke. …However, excuse me for being impolite, but do you have the authority to appoint people?”

Ah, he doesn’t believe me. The majority of the reason is because father is not in the proximity… So perhaps he’s thinking that I’m fabricating information for my own exploit?

And therefore, I will reveal my last card here.

“Of course. Because at this time, I have accepted the position of being the representative of the Feudal Lord.”

At the same time, I showed him the Letter of Appointment. This was something father had handed to me before I left for the territory.

…Truthfully, I have yet to announce it publicly that I was appointed as the representative of the Feudal Lord. And I still have no intention of announcing it after this. Since it has a great effect when it comes to critical moments. …Such as now.

I thought that he probably would have never imagined I would be appointed and the representative of the Feudal Lord, and indeed, when I looked at Moneda’s face, he had a surprised expression.

Moreover, as the Feudal Lord’s proxy, father has placed all responsibilities of governing the territory to me. That authority is remarkable and is almost on an equal footing as the

Feudal Lord himself. In other words, it was as if father is declaring that he is unstatisfied with young brother becoming his successor. But I am myself, and I will carry out my duties confidently from start to finish. Because it was also written in the letter, it can’t be helped if people were surprised. …Father as well, I wonder what he’s thinking about.

On the other hand, because it was useful, I am very grateful for it.

Common Sense of a Duke’s Daughter - Chapter 9

Outcome

“…Thank you very much.”

After Moneda said that, he returned the letter respectfully.

“Well, how about it?”

“I will accept the offer with pleasure.”

“Oh, you sure made your decision quite quickly. I thought you would take some time to think about it.”

“It is important for a merchant to have the ability to make quick decisions.”

“Regardless, I am thankful. Now then, I would like to talk about the future plans in detail… I wonder, when will you have the time to visit me?”

“Please give me three days. Because I need to hand over all the work I have presently.”

“That suits me just fine. Then, in three days, please come to the house.”

“Certainly.”

Haaa~ I feel relieved as though a weight is lifted off my shoulders. I was able to pull Moneda in without any problems, and in three days time, I will also have a confirmation from Sebastian.

After accomplishing the job, I was able to return to the Duke’s house with everyone.

* * *

My name is Moneda. I’m currently serving the Commerce Guild in Armelia as their Vice Chief of Accounts. As to what kind of position the Vice Chief of Account is, he is the person in charge of the accounts in the headquarters.

To begin with, the main purpose of the Commerce Guild is to provide human resources and to mediate between fellow merchants among other things. It is an organization consisting of these so-called merchants.

A merchant must join the Commerce Guild without fail. If a merchant joins, he will receive protection and will only have to pay the merchant’s tax.

The Vice Chief of Accounts is in charge of the funds to operate the Commerce Guild and to administer the merchant’s taxes paid by the members of the Commerce Guild.

Although work is hectic, I find it challenging and enjoyable.

But one day, I had an appointment. The other party was Iris Lana Armelia. She was not only the daughter of the Feudal Lord of Armelia where I live, I am also indebted to her for picking me up from an orphanage.

But to be honest, I found it really troublesome… or so I thought. Although I am indeed indebted to her, it is a different story when it comes to work. I won’t mix private matters

with work.

I found out from my network of merchants that she has returned to the territory after her engagement was annulled, and she'll probably be asking me for something problematic… That's why I was quite suspicious.

…However.

"Hmm, is that so? Even though the commerce in the Royal City have decreased?"

When I heard the talk about business, it was as if a bomb had dropped.

Why do you know that kind of thing… In the first place, it's those kinds of questions that makes me suspicious. Indeed, an astute person will be able to understand it. Nevertheless, that was something only someone who concentrated on account books on a daily basis would know.

Why would someone like her who is unrelated to such things know about this… These words were not something a person who has been surrounded by young ladies and young masters in the Royal City would say.

This, I will be eaten if I underestimate her. She gives me the same tense feeling I had when I met with an influential person soon after I first started my job. However, I was too slow to notice. The initiative of the conversation was already in her grasp.

I, who had lost the opening round, once again broached the subject. And once we have reached a critical point, she said she had a "favor." As I thought, she was just waiting for the right timing to attack.

Although I was surprised that she had a favor, I was even more surprised to know what that favor was.

Reformation of the territory as a whole? Mid-term and long-term reform? By no means would I have ever thought those words would come from this young mistress.

I thought it was interesting. If she was the same person as she was in the old days, I would have immediately come out and tell her that it was nothing but a pipe dream. However, it was clear that she had the proper understanding of the present situation, and I have our previous conversation to remind me of it.

Nevertheless, in the end, that was all it was. I threw a fastball with the intention of considering it. Since I didn't think she had the authority to personally make decisions regarding the management. In order words, the pathway the promising future cannot be seen.

On the contrary, she was able to "clear" it completely.

I never expected for her to be the Feudal Lord's proxy!

Finally, the strongest card I had has been eliminated. Really, there is no need to consider anything further.

…And then I acted quickly. I accepted, and when she left to return home, I immediately prepared for someone to take over.

In three days, I wonder what kind of plans she'll be broaching. That is something I'm

looking forward to.

Common Sense of a Duke’s Daughter - Chapter 10

Conducting a Conference

Now then, three days had gone by in no time, and as promised, Moneda knocked at the gate. With that said, I will now be holding the first conference. First of all, I should reveal my plans in order for them to understand.

“Everyone, thank you for gathering here today. The first meeting will now commence.”

Although I said that, the people present were those whom I can trust… In other words, the people who went with me during the inspection, Moneda, Sebastian, and Sei as well. Sei is one of the children whom I brought to the house when I was young, and he is now helping Sebastian with the management of the mansion.

“…First of all, I would like to express my ideas. For one month, I have inspected our territory and have confirmed things with Sebastian… Compared to other territories, our territory is abundant.”

This was really the case. From the Royal City, all the way to our territory has a springtime weather all year long. Thus, the farming industry in the southern part of the territory is prosperous, and since it’s also facing the sea, trade can be conducted. It is not incorrect to call this territory the second capital city of the Kingdom.

“When I went to inspect the territory, my impression of it is… Is similar to a ripe fruit. Although it’s fine to eat it now, if we wait a little longer, it will eventually rot. That’s what I think.”

I guess they did not expect me to have this kind of impression since they kept blinking their eyes in bewilderment. Especially Sebastian and Sei.

“…The rich get richer, and the poor get poorer. And because the stores lack new commodities, the air has become stagnant.”

For someone like me, who used to live in a capitalist country such as Japan, I belong to the pro-competitive society faction, so I believe that it can’t be helped for wealth to accumulate to some extent. However, this territory is different. To begin with, it’s impossible to display competitiveness.

For as long as they remain unskillful, there will never be an opportunity for them to climb up.

“If the people living in the territory are not rich, the territory will never become rich.”

That’s how it works. When the market is limited, it will eventually collapse. In other words, if we do not actively participate in prospering the people, with the current economic flow, our territory will decay.

When I casually looked around, I saw question marks hovering above their heads.

“In other words… To put it simply, I want to create a territory where children will not have to go through the things you have experienced in the past.”

Looking convinced, everyone nodded their heads in agreement while smiling.

“It is our aspiration to achieve a large goal. It will take a hundred years before the territory will develop to something comparable to our goal, and the first thing we must do is improve the quality of life of the people. Therefore, in order for this to happen, we need to push forward with the reforms. First of all, I would like to utilize the funds the Ducal House presently has to help manage the territory. After that, establish a bank, centralize the government affairs, taxation system reforms, roadway maintenance, compulsory education…”

“…U-umm. What exactly is a bank?”

While I was talking, Sei interrupted me and asked timidly.

“Ah, my apologies. Because I was too absorbed, I got in way over myself. Regarding the bank, it is my intention to let Sebastian, Sei, and also Moneda handle of it. I will talk to you about it in detail a little later. …However, the bank will not be realized unless we first help the people prosper and reform the taxation system here in our territory.”

“In other words, you want to use the taxes collected from the people to manage the territory, and gather money from elsewhere to maintain the Ducal House?”

“That’s right, Moneda.”

“Specifically, what are you intending to do?”

“For starters, launch a business.”

When I said that, the atmosphere of the conference froze momentarily.

* * *

Common Sense of a Duke’s Daughter - Chapter 11

Commercialization

“…Start a business, you say…”

Sebastian and Sei are probably against it. Their facial expressions turned a little overcast.

“To do something you’re not used to, there are many examples of that. I think it’ll be better if you stop thinking in that direction.”

Moneda, who was part of the Commerce Guild, was also against it. However, if money is not earned, my vision will really end up being nothing but a pipe dream.

If we meticulously maintain the mansion and cut down our expenses for food and luxurious clothing… it means we will be able to allocate that budget for road maintenance and other things.

But after taking the reputation of the Duke’s household into consideration, we can’t really cut down too much on expenses… Thus, I came up with an idea, and that is to start a business. It was fitting since I found something interesting during the inspection.

“Well, Moneda. Could you please not stop me before you hear me out? Since it might be possible to make some profit.”

When Moneda heard what I said, a dubious expression appeared on his face.

“How should I say this. I am after all a daughter of a noble. For someone like me who has never stood on the battlefield alongside other merchants, and to suddenly announce that I want to start a business, your reaction is only natural.”

“…No, please excuse me.”

“It’s fine. Now, continuing with what I was saying. I would like to sell this commodity. Rehme, please take that thing out.”

“I understand~”

The thing Rehme took out from the bag was a brown fruit.

“…This is…?”

Sebastian and Sei, who seemed to have never seen one before, scrutinized it.

“This is a fruit called cacao~ It seems that these are harvested in the tropical regions in the south, and the locals will occasionally grind them and make them into a drink~”

That’s right, cacao. The land extending from the Royal City to our fief experiences springtime all year long. Our fief expands from north to south, hence the southern regions have a tropical climate. With that being the case, cacao appeared in that region.

“…I have heard of it. But if I’m not mistaken, because it is too bitter, it is not something fit for drinking…”

As expected of Moneda. The Commerce Guild should be well aware of these kinds of products. …But when I was doing the inspection with Rehme, I was quite surprised to

discover it. This child really has knowledge about almost anything… After all, she also knew the step by step process executed by locals to manufacture the raw cacao fruit into a drink. You are also probably surprised.

“As I thought, it has yet to be commercialized. I’m relieved to hear Moneda say that.”

“Ye-yes…”

No way, are you planning to sell this? Also, what’s with your expression brimming with confidence? Is probably what he’s thinking.

However, I do have plenty of confidence in this. No matter what anyone say, desserts are, after all, important to nobilities. …For example, during tea time.

“…Tanya. Open the door.”

“Certainly.”

When Tanya opened the door, one of the cooks in our household, Merida, was waiting outside. By the way, Merida is another one of the children I picked up when I was young. Tanya, Ryle, Dida, Moneda, Rehme, Sei, and Merida. These seven people were the children whom I picked up.

Because Merida wanted to be a cook, she became one of the cooks in our household. She is the person who cooks my meals, and because I am dieting, I made various requests, but she nevertheless delivered. In other words, she is a splendid cook.

“This is a dessert Merida made using cacao as the main ingredient.”

What appeared was, of course, chocolate. Although it was something I was familiar with, everyone else looked at it in wonder.

“Please try it.”

Everyone timidly ate the strange and unknown food.

“…Delicious!”

However, after eating a mouthful of it, there was nothing but words of praise.

“This is, something made from cacao, right? Certainly if it is this… By the way, how will this be priced?”

“Because sugar was used, I intended to price it a little high. The target demographic will be nobles, and because it uses an abundant of high-class ingredients, I’m intending to market it as a luxury food. But sometime in the near future, I will eventually make it a low-priced commodity where more people will be able to buy the product. Now then, Merida. Please bring in the others.”

“Certainly.”

What was brought in a while ago was a nondescript plate of milk chocolate. What was brought in next were plates of dark chocolate and various assortments of chocolates such as truffles.

“Although these snacks were also made from cacao beans just like the one earlier, the taste is completely different. Please try it.”

This time, compared to earlier, everyone ate it without hesitation.

“Wow~ Delicious! I like this round looking one~”

“As for me, I like this plain one and it’s easy to eat.”

Everyone respectively took a liking to the different snacks depending on their preferences. I am relieved that the overall evaluation is favorable.

“This way, there’s a variety of flavors. As someone who was part of the Commerce Guild up until recently, what are your impressions, Moneda?”

“It is a commodity that’s never been heard of before… With the proper advertising, it can be launched immediately. I believe these have that much appeal. It’s also a good thing that the target demographic has already been established.”

“Thank you. Since that is the case, Sei. I would like for you be my hands and feet, and help me open up a market outlet where this commodity can be sold.”

“…Me? Although it might be forward of me to say this but, wouldn’t Moneda be a better choice…?”

“Moneda will be involved with the establishment of the bank I spoke of earlier. I consider that he is the right person for the job because negotiations must be made with the Commerce Guild one way or another. In addition, with the nobility being the targeted demographic, it would be better if someone like you, who is working in the Ducal House, to be in charge of this, and you’ll also be able to respond quickly.”

“…I respectfully obey. I will do my best to answer to your expectations.”

“With that, it is settled. We will now focus on how we will get this commodity out in the market on the right track. First things first, Sebastian. Please draw up a contract with the village harvesting the cacao beans. Also, Ryle and Dida, please think about how many people will be necessary to secure the transportation from the village to the house and give me a report. I’m sure you remember the roads we passed through when we did our inspection, right?”

“I understand. I will start on it immediately.”

Sebastian, Ryle, and Dida stood up.

“Merida, please make more of these snacks for trial purposes. I’ll hand over any other recipes I think of afterward. And Tanya, please make preparations to write a letter to mother.”

“…To the Madam, you say?”

“Yes. There is no other person better than mother when it comes to advertising. If we send her the commodity, she will advertise it.”

“Certainly.”

“Moneda, please proceed in establishing a firm. When you do so, please take Sei along with you. If possible, please secure a place where this product can be manufactured. …For the next three months, because it will be the firm’s busiest and important time, I’m sorry about this, but will you be willing to offer your help?”

“Of course. There is no way I will miss the chance of taking part of something this interesting.”

“Thank you. Rehme, please stay behind because there’s something I’d like to confirm with you. Regarding the average price of products currently out in the market, if it’s you, you are familiar with them, right?”

“Yes~ If it’s within the span of the last fifteen years, please ask me anything.”

“Then, I thank everyone in advance for your individual work. If anything happens please consult with me by all means.”

Common Sense of a Duke’s Daughter - Chapter 12

Conglomerate Established

Now then, with that kind of notion, we established a conglomerate. The name of our conglomerate is “Azura Conglomerate.” With everyone demonstrating their excellence in their respective positions, we managed to introduce our commodity to the market in no time.

When I sent the product to mother for trial purposes, she apparently immediately held a tea party and presented them, and in no time, it became a popular amongst the nobility. Presently, the conglomerate is exhilarated that the product is so popular, to the point where we cannot catch up with the orders.

Hurray for reincarnation knowledge.

An idea was proposed that we increase the production line, but that proposal was turned down. Since the target demographic are the nobility, rather than increasing the production, it would be better to maintain the pace to keep the scarcity value.

To add on to that point, in order to enforce a firm image of the brand, a lily motif has been imprinted on the boxes of the chocolates. …This was done in preparation when competitors appear in the future. Although for now, one has yet to appear.

Presently, different from the noble line, a separate line for commoners is in the process of being established.

To be more specific, chocolate itself is still a luxury food. What we are considering is to open a cafe and sell food such as chocolate cream crepes and chocolate coated fruits. …Or rather, we have already found a place and we have also guaranteed the distribution route for the ingredients. Thus, it won’t be long until the operation starts running.

Sei has been very, very busy running here and there.

Although I said that, it’s not as though I’m unoccupied myself. Now that the conglomerate has taken off, I am concurrently managing the conglomerate and preparing for the reforms for the fief.

Even though my schedule is hectic, I find it somewhat nostalgic because my previous life was also like this.

Let’s put aside those thoughts for now and move on to the first thing on the agenda. First, is a meeting with Sei.

“…The present state of affairs is written in those documents.”

“The noble line is doing well as usual. How are you doing with securing workers?”

“It is proceeding well, so please be at ease. In just a short while, a lot of chefs came to apply to the conglomerate. Unknown food… because of this matter, a lot of people wanted to learn how to make them.”

“I see. If that’s the case, please introduce the “day off” system I talked to you about last

time. Speaking of Merida, if you judge that any of those chefs are suitable, please refer them to her because I want her to start another line. Since the preparations are ready, it's about time we start on it. Thus, I would like for her to check it out in my place."

"As you wish."

"In the future, not only do I want to distribute our products in the Royal City, I also want them to circulate to other areas… For that to happen, we will need to secure the distribution channel to those areas… I wonder if we should just establish a transportation department? Tanya, please call Rehme and Moneda for me."

Like I requested, Tanya immediately went to call Rehme and Moneda.

"…Moneda, how do merchants normally secure the distribution of commodities?"

"Well… If it's a small to medium-sized store, the merchant will personally bring it to those areas. If it's a large store, they will hire escorts or take their own subordinates along and personally deliver it themselves."

"…If that's the case, as I thought, it would be a good idea to establish a transport department. Rehme, please immediately pull up a map. After that, along the roads of this Kingdom, please pick out areas with flat grounds and give me information about their climate and the difference in temperature. In addition, calculate how much time it'll take to get there from our fief. Please discuss with Ryle how many escorts will be necessary and what the cost will be."

"Yes~! I wonder what is going to start this time around~?"

"Right now, I guess you can say that the transportation department is in development? But before we put it on paper, we need to consider how much it will cost. Then, Sei. First of all, make a draft of employment for those workers you mentioned earlier, and also, talk to Merida to keep her in the loop. Rehme as well, please work on it immediately. Tanya, please call Sebastian. And Moneda, please remain here, let us now develop the concept of a bank."

After I gave my orders in rapid succession, everyone immediately moved to carry them out. Or rather, I think it's about time we increase the number of staff. Although I wanted to slowly increase the staff… we are overwhelming insufficient in numbers. If Sei continues this way, he will eventually collapse… and things wouldn't be good.

Oops, my head needs to switch gears, switch gears.

"…Then, Moneda. Do you have any questions regarding what we talked about before?"

It was about time to launch a full-scale campaign and push forward the reformation of the fief. Meanwhile, I conveyed the idea of establishing a bank to Moneda before the time was right.

Although the current market is circulating money, there is no institution to control it. This was also something that surprised me… I wonder if the citizens of the fief deposit their money in their draws? If not, it seems like they deposit it in the Commerce Guild. It seems like the Commerce Guild also offers that kind of services, and people can withdraw the amount of money they deposited in any Commerce Guild branch, which is very

convenient.

However, the Commerce Guild does not do it professionally, they really just keep the money entrusted to them.

“So, do I have any questions for me up to this point?”

“No. However, you did really well to think of this idea.”

Well, I wasn’t exactly the person who came up with this idea. Although I wanted to say that, I can’t, so I remained silent and smiled.

“For starters, please purchase a building that will be used for the bank. After that, please use my name to arrange a meeting with the Guild Master of the Commerce Guild and other Presidents of important conglomerate.”

“I understand.”

Common Sense of a Duke’s Daughter - Chapter 13

Meeting

After that, the next several weeks of efforts was spent preparing for the establishment of the bank, such as ensuring the building and securing the equipment… As usual, there is a mountain load of things to be done.

Finally, the promised day of the meeting had arrived. The designated location was the Headquarters of the Commerce Guild here in the Duke of Armelia's fief.

When I had a meeting with Moneda in this place, I thought that the interior was calming and profound, and it's still the same as always.

"…Now then, everyone. Thank you for taking time off of your busy schedules to gather here today."

I gave a greeting to start things off. Besides, I really am extremely grateful to the members who had gathered here today because they genuinely do all have very, very busy schedules.

"No, not at all. We were also looking forward to meeting the President of the conglomerate that has risen to the spotlight recently."

He said with a sharp glint in his eyes. A-as expected… an impressive full mark.

"I didn't meet everyone here today as the President of Azura Conglomerate, but as the proxy of the Feudal Lord of the Duke of Armelia's fief."

"Oh, as the proxy of the Feudal Lord, is it?"

"Yes. Otherwise, it will be impossible for me to gather everyone today. After all, our conglomerate is still a newcomer."

"How humble. I've heard all about your activities."

"If that's the case… I will happily accept your words of praise. However, today's business is a different matter…"

The atmosphere in the surrounding froze instantly.

"First of all, I would like to establish a bank in our fief. By all means, I would like everyone to use it."

"…A bank, is it?"

"Yes."

"Excuse my impoliteness, but what exactly is it?"

"To put it simply, it is a developed version of the repository services provided by the Commerce Guild. Its main purposes are depository services, money order services, and financing services."

"Depository services? Financing… services? I've never heard of those before… What kind of significance do they have?"

“Let’s start with the depository services. It is similar to the services that the Commerce Guild has been providing, where a conglomerate or an individual can entrust their funds. Those kinds of services will also be conducted in the bank.

The funds the people part of the Commerce Guild spend to constantly hire escorts will no longer be necessary. Don’t you think it’ll be an advantage for the Commerce Guild?

Furthermore, you can settle transactions between accounts with the bank. For example, if mutual parties deposit funds in the bank, cash reserves can be moved between accounts and thus will not have to carry cash with them.”

About the depository services, I thought it would be fine to make similar to the ones in Japan. In other words, a bankbook and seal. However, since it’s only been recently established, it’ll be difficult to process the account transfers.

Thus, I thought it would be a good idea for the conglomerates to create a checking account. Also, because it is likely that people will travel to different regions, it would be a good idea to create cheques and drafts.

From here on out, since I intended on drawing up family registers, and wondered if it’ll be a good idea to create IDs along with it. In addition, as proof that that person’s ID does indeed belong to them, there should be a stamp on the back.

Nevertheless, it’s not really necessary to have everything the same as Japan… Or rather, let’s polish this idea later. Since the family registers will take some time, it’ll be fine if it’s introduced after the bank has already been properly established.

As for the seal, since there are no kanji characters in this world, as I thought, it’ll have to be the crest of nobles. While I was pondering on what should be done, I went to consult with Moneda.

It was the same for the money order services, I had to consider how to handle those after the an account has been opened. Machines don’t exist here. When the patron opens an account in the bank, each patron will receive an account book, and using this method, they can deposit their money.

By the way, we have already established the guard division, and I intend to put them to use. Guards are necessary for banks, especially when we start shipping… right? Of course, it’s not as though the guards had excellent qualifications upon being hired… thus, an initial investment was needed.

“…I see. However, I wonder if that will really be safe? After all, they are important funds. There must not be any risk.”

“Of course, it will be placed under the protection of our House. I can guarantee the quality of the security guards who will be protecting the funds. On the other hand, if a fraud were to happen, I will use my position to apprehend the criminal.”

“Hmmm. Then what about financing services?”

“As for financing services, it lends out the collected funds… In other words, money lending. Of course, strict conditions will be imposed… And if one is able to meet the requirements, they will be able to borrow capital. For example, funds to start up a new

business?”

“That is interesting.”

“You can entrust your money at any given time and only withdraw the necessary amount. Transactions will be easier to settle. In addition, if you need capital, you can borrow them when necessary. “Our House” will be in charge of the safety of the funds. And because it will be under our House, the funds will always remain secure unless our House falls into ruin. …What do you think? Earlier, you kindly complimented the management of the conglomerate, but what do you think about Feudal Lord returning the profit to the fief? After all, the fief’s money belongs to the fief.”

Although I said that, it’s not like the fief will be guaranteed to receive funding from the bank. Especially when the people in front of me are not willing to make direct investments. After all, I intended to spend the tax money collected from the people of the fief for the fief.

That said, if our conglomerate did not succeed, most of the taxes collected would have been spent on maintaining the Ducal House instead of being allocated to road maintenance. They are not mistaken about where the profits of the conglomerate goes, are they?

“In exchange for that, what will you be demanding from us?”

“As for establishing the bank, I do not have any request in mind. Because the most important is to return the money of the fief to the fief in order to develop it.

Ah, but the Commerce Guild has always been in charge of this, so I would like to ask permission if it would be fine for us to ‘headhunt’ those people and employ them for the bank?

Since there is a lot a things to learn, it would be better if we hire people with experience. Also, although we have prepared for the bank’s headquarters to be here, we have yet to prepare where to set up other branches. Thus, I would be grateful if the Commerce Guild has any suggestions.”

“As for our guild, since we have always been in a deficit in this area, we will be more than happy with the takeover… So if it’s only that much, it will be our pleasure to cooperate.”

Alright, the prospect of establishing the bank is looking bright.

“…Then, next item the agenda. Shall I move to the “main issue” involving the conglomerates now?”

The atmosphere which had relaxed a little turned tense again. There is no reason to end it here. …Since the people who had gathered here today have a really busy schedule… it will be a wasted opportunity if I do not grasp this chance.

“About the bank we were talking about earlier, it has been decided that the tax collected from the people of the fief will be invested on road maintenance of the roads in the fief. And also, there one more thing. The establishment of an ‘academy.’”

“Academy… you say? Such as the one in the Royal City?”

“If it’s that kind of disadvantageous academy, there’s no need to use the tax money to

build it. What I would like to build is an academy that has a primary division which will teach students how to read and write, and an advanced division, which it teach specialized skills to students… The fief's taxes will be used for this because I plan on passing a bill, making primary education compulsory in our fief. Presently, I want to direct everyone's attention to the advanced division."

"In what way?"

"Frankly speaking, I would like you to invest in it. Although funds will be acceptable, materials and equipment will also be welcomed."

"Wouldn't it be fine to ask the bank you spoke of earlier to finance it?"

"The bank is dependent on the funds of the Ducal House and the taxes of the people of the fief. If the bank is used to finance something so extensive, it will ruin the balance of income and expenditure, and will result in the collapse of the bank management."

"There is some truth to that. If that's the case, wouldn't it be fine if we wait until the academy has been founded?"

"If possible, I would like to build the academy as soon as possible. Because people are important resources in our fief, it will be a shame if we leave them alone and don't polish them."

"…Hmmm. What is the concept of the academy?"

"I will distribute the materials now, please look at them."

Sebastian who came with me distributed the documents to everyone. These are the materials I spent preparing for the last several weeks. …Thanks to that, I have not had much time to sleep lately.

"First of all, I would like to establish a Medical and Pharmaceutical department. Afterward, Fief Administration and Accounting department."

"A medical department… you say?"

The conglomerate directors had surprised expressions on their faces. I guess it's only natural. Because the doctors in this world are only employed by royalties and aristocrats, and thus the knowledge of medicine is not widespread.

As for the value of such knowledge… every member from the conglomerate can understand it. Normally, in order to learn such knowledge, a high remuneration must be paid.

…That's right, "usually," that is. I also desired to employ a few of those people. I wanted to employ two or three people for our House, however, I don't know where mother heard about this information, but she made an introduction.

That person seemed to be quite idle. I mean, up until a while ago, that person was relaxing in the countryside. Then, that person suddenly wanted to cultivate the younger generation and came here.

As for me, I would like to take advantage of mother's connections to negotiate with the doctor and for future negotiations done by the conglomerate by all means.

By the way, farmers and scholars will act as instructors in the agriculture department. For classroom learning… and hands-on skills.

As for the scholars, I once again took full advantage of father and mother’s connection to gather them. Afterward, I’m also intending for Rehme to stand as a lecturer.

* * *

Common Sense of a Duke’s Daughter - Chapter 14

Negotiations of the Young Lady

“Knowledge is also an asset, is it…”

“Yes.”

“However, it’s because the number of doctors is scarce that’s why they are valuable. If they were to increase in numbers, their value will probably drop…”

“What are you saying. Right now their numbers are far from enough.”

The people can consult with a healer if there is one living in town. That said, because not many have the proper education, they can’t really be counted upon. In addition, in remote areas and frontier regions, it is said that there aren’t any practitioners and people can only rely on dubious remedies.

“I don’t think I need to say this but, there is profits to be made when there is an increase in the number of doctors among the population. That said, the conglomerates will be able to make lucrative profits by making equipment used by doctors and medical ingredients. In addition, with research, we can expect new medicines to be developed.”

If one looks closely, a director of a conglomerate who deals with sales of medicines was sorely tempted. Un, it has probably captured his interest.

“As for the Fief Administration and Accounting Department, its aim is to bring up talented people to make the future of the fief more prosperous. …Especially the Accounting Department, don’t you consider that is related to everyone?”

“I can more or less understand how Fief Administration will involve us… But how is the Accounting Department related to us?”

“Please look at the third page of the document.”

“This is…”

“This is a short excerpt of Azura Conglomerate’s account book.”

“This is, an account book!?”

Everyone looked really amazed when they viewed the contents. In this world, there is no concept of Double Entry Bookkeeping! I can’t believe they don’t have something this convenient. Even though people said that “Double Entry Bookkeeping is one of the most impressive invention born from the knowledge of humans.”

What is even more surprising is that their format is not unified. Some conglomerates use Single Entry Bookkeeping while other conglomerates use the profit-and-loss bookkeeping method by counting their products… That’s how it’s been until now. For me, who wants to promote the capitalist system, I cannot accept this.

“This way, one can immediately see when payments are made. There’s also another document called a ‘balance sheet,’ and with this, you can easily discern the assets and liabilities. In addition, there is an income statement which immediately shows the profits

and expenses. As a result, one can easily see the “quantitative” value of the conglomerate.”

I thought that it would be a benefit to guide merchants with experience and good intuition, and with this, they will be more unified in the future. Well… there is also my desire to eagerly practice something related to accounting job I used to have in my past life.

“When you want to apply for a loan at the bank, you’ll need to submit this form. After all, with the tax reform happening in the near future, poll tax will be eliminated.

With this account book, one can easily read the report of how much profit is made, and you’ll have to pay the appropriate tax according to this. Of course, there will still be loopholes in this taxation system.

Nevertheless, with the taxation system being based on your assets, you’ll be able to save on taxes. When one takes some time to consider it, one will find that it will be a big help for everyone.”

“…Do you have any authority to change the taxation system?”

“Yes. I am not just acting as the Feudal Lord’s proxy. Just like what’s written in this letter, I have been given the position to administer the fief with equal authority as the Fief Lord.”

“…If one enrolls in that academy you speak of, will they be able to learn the method of your conglomerate’s account books?”

When a regular person looks at the account books, they might not be able to understand the value of it… However, as expected of the directors of the conglomerates, they noticed the value of this book.

“Yes, of course.”

“I’ve been beaten… I didn’t think you’d bring out such a big bait, or rather, the big bait will probably prove to be very successful…”

“Yes. There are also other advantages, you know? For example, when the agricultural department starts researching on cultivation improvements, and if they meet with success, those methods will be handed over to the conglomerates who invested in this. What do you think? Isn’t it tempting?”

“Haha, it is tempting.”

“Now then, I would like to talk to the directors of the conglomerates who wants to make an investment. I do not want to take up any more time of those who are not interested.”

To my proposal, only two people left their seats. Oh, I thought that at least half of the people will leave.

“A lot of people surprisingly remained… No matter what is it fine like this?”

“Iris-sama. We are, after all, “First-rate Merchants” and we are proud to take part in anything that will yield profits. Rather than being bound by short-term profit, we are Merchants who are moved by large long-term profits. With large profits, it will only be natural to have some risk. And we’ll only make our decisions after considering the risks and returns. In conclusion, we will never let an opportunity to make large profits slip by.”

“Well~… I guess that’s only natural.”

“If you’re nothing but an average noble young lady, we’ll probably just throw the idea away as though it’s naught but a pipe dream. However, you not only created a conglomerate with your own hands, you have already reached our standings… No, climbed even higher. And what we value is this ability of yours.”

“…I am once again proud to be praised by you. Because it is you first-class merchants who are supporting our fief.”

Common Sense of a Duke’s Daughter - Chapter 15

Inside the Carriage

“…Even so, Iris-sama sure has the guts.”

Moneda brought up the topic while we riding the carriage. The people inside the carriage right now are Moneda, Sebastian, and I. Dida, on the other hand, was sitting outside the carriage acting as our driver.

“Oh my, how impolite. Even I was actually very tense.”

“Nevertheless, it didn’t look that way at all to me. The main point is that I never thought you would approach those members to talk about a business proposal.”

“If that’s the case, Moneda, why did you think I called them for?”

“Of course, to report about the establishment of the bank…”

“I did do that.”

“No, I didn’t mean implement that you didn’t…”

I started laughing unintentionally. I was also feeling really nervous back then, it was a situation similar to walking on a tightrope. After all, those documents took three weeks to put together. Even though the documents were stuffed with a lot of details… everything went well with flying colors. I felt uneasy thinking about the various different questions they’ll have regarding the overflowing materials.

“However, why can we not have the bank fund the educational institution? In addition, there’s also the matter regarding the road maintenance…”

“It is impossible to sever the distribution of goods. However, if the distribution channels have been improved, the circulation of money also improves… Since that’s the case, it would be better if we start as quickly as possible. In addition, if those funds are returned to the people, wouldn’t it be easier for children be able to attend the academy?”

Of course, the primary division will be completely free of charge. Nonetheless, I don’t believe there will be a lot of people pleased with the idea. Especially those people living in remote areas.

However, if funds were allocated to these “Public Works” such as road constructions, it will silence those people, circulate money amongst them, and revitalize the economy.

“Smart people have probably already noticed the benefit of road maintenance. Distribution of goods will improve, and because a lot of materials and food will be needed to provide for the worker during the construction… their businesses will prosper greatly.

When an investment is made, the Duke’s House will be indebted to them, and will also receive information on researched materials. …When they consider these things, I thought they will jump at the chance. The only thing I had to worry about is not being eaten up.”

“Young mistress, you’ve actually considered things up to that point…”

“Oh my, did you think I didn’t take them into consideration?”

“No, I did not mean to say such things.”

“Is that so? Well then, Moneda. When we get back, please go to the bank headquarters and open up the bank. Just as we have rehearsed before, start accepting deposits, opening accounts, and various other procedures.

After that, please secure the funds for road maintenance. …In other words? Moneda. Please prepare not to have any holidays for a while. Things will become really busy.

“It’s exactly what I was hoping for.”

“Sebastian, you’ll also be very busy. Please consult with Rehme the order of which to conduct the construction work as well as making more efficient roads. Also, please prepare documents with the calculation of expenses for the construction and road maintenance.”

“I understand. I have already finished discussing it with Rehme-dono, and the calculation of the expenses is done. All that’s left is to submit the documents.”

“As expected of Sebastian. Please submit those documents to me. I will take a look at it immediately. If possible, I want to turn it over to Moneda so that we can start on it right away.”

* * *

My name is Sebastian. I don’t have a surname… However, I take pride in serving the House of the Duke of Armelia for generations.

By the way, my work consists of managing the mansion as well as the fief instead of the present head, the Prime Minister who is busy in the Royal City most of the time. Because the Duke’s fief is a genuinely extensive land, it is impossible for me to manage it closely, so I utilize my vast contacts. …Or at least, I used to.

When the young mistress accepted the position of the Feudal Lord’s proxy, my calm life changed dramatically. …To sum it up with one word, busy. I am exhausted.

With me managing the both mansion and fief at the same time, a fellow servant came up to me and asked, “When will you have the time to rest?” And this happened quite often. Because I’m like that, I have complete admiration for the way the young mistress works.

To be honest… when the young mistress arrived, I thought that she will leave everything to me… At least, that’s what I thought. But the moment the young mistress arrived, she asked me for the fiscal financial report of the fief, read it with extreme speed, and went out to inspect the fief vigorously.

Then, she launched a conglomerate and made a fortune in a blink of an eye. Right now, she is busy trying to reform the regulations of the fief. …I wonder when she takes the time to rest, or rather, it’s a question of whether or not she sleeps at all.

Her work ethics and the way she gives adequate instructions, just thinking of those leaves me astonished. For her sake, I do not mind overworking these old bones of mine. …While supporting this person, it is a pleasure to see what the future will look like.

However, I do have one concern, the young mistress is looking more and more haggard recently. Although the person herself said that it’s because she’s trying to lose weight…

I’m worried that weight loss might not be the only reason… but fatigue as well.

There is no mistake that the future of our fief lies on the shoulders of the young mistress. And because of that, the presence of the young mistress is getting bigger day by day.

I must support the young mistress as much as I can so that she doesn’t collapse.

Today as well, I will ask the chef to prepare the young mistress’ favorite food. …That’s what I was thinking on the way home from the Commerce Guild.

* * *

Common Sense of a Duke’s Daughter - Chapter 16

Aesthetics are Universal

…By the way, it's been half a year since the bank was established. During this half a year, the Public Works' first project, road maintenance, began and is progressing steadily.

As for the bank, different conglomerates opened an account under the names of their conglomerates and made deposits. And those people part of the conglomerates opened an individual account and it began to spread… Now, the presence of the bank has become larger in urban areas. Because of this, Moneda looked really busy. The challenge right now is… probably how to spread this to other cities.

Also, capital for the educational institution has been gathered safely and is now under construction. When it is completed, it will immediately be open for operation. However, since the construction of the advanced division is the priority, it will still be a long way to go before all the children of the fief will be able to attend the primary division.

My workload has not decreased at all, or rather, it has increased. Indeed, because the workload has increased recently to the point of being in a risk of overworking, there was an urgent need to gather officials to help with managing the fief. Because there are already some people in the house who had been helping with the fief, I immediately engaged them for work for us.

The departments are as follows: Finance, Education, Public Affairs, Public Works, and Judicial Affairs. Moreover, it is a system where I, as the representative of the Fief Lord, is at the top.

By the way, the Finance department is concurrently working on the taxation. Each department is to calculate their expenses and submit a report in a form of a balance sheet. From there, the bank will take a look at it and give the approval needed. Again, this is being done to prepare of the taxation reform in the future.

The Education department operates in a similar manner to the Ministry of Education in Japan. The academy personnel will decide on what subjects they want to teach, but the Education Department reserve the rights to choose the contents and how much funds will be spent.

The Public Affairs department are in charge of managing the people of the fief. As of now, they are busy running about in preparation to make family registers. …I was also thinking of eventually establishing Social Welfare.

The Public Works is currently in charge of the road construction, and eventually, they will also be responsible for building public facilities. In other words, because the road maintenance is underway, it is not an exaggeration to say that they are very busy.

As for the Judicial Affairs, just as its name suggests, they are in charge of implementing the laws in the fief. They are currently in charge of enforcing the current laws, and will be working on law reforms later on.

Now, since I'm tired, I should go take a hot bath.

“Young mistress, is there something the matter?”

“It’s rare that I have some free time, and since I’m tired, I thought to take a hot bath. Can you prepare it?”

When I asked Tanya to prepare one, Tanya immediate left to take care of it. Tanya has been overprotective lately. …I wonder if I really do look all that tired?

“…Today, young mistress somehow looks really happy, it something happened?”

“Ah, as I thought, you can tell? Fufufu, the thing I really wanted had arrived.”

Fufufu… After being busy for half a year researching and researching, it has finally been completed. And today, I am intending to test it out.

I slowly got into the bath, and when I felt that my fatigue has been healed, I immediately used it. Haaa~ The aroma of rose smells really good.

When I got up from the hot bath in high spirits, Tanya was outside preparing my outfit.

“Please excuse me, I’m coming in, young mistress. I finished the preparations… E-eh!”

When Tanya looked at my hair, a surprised expression appeared on her face. Fufufu, it’s wonderful, isn’t it? Since she’s the kind of person who usually doesn’t have much of an expression, the effect is excellent.

“Young mistress’ hair looks really beautiful… It is as though it’s shining. Please excuse me, young mistress. Exactly how in the world did it turn out like this…”

“Fufufu… It’s because I used this.”

What I took out was a small bottle. And inside it was a pale yellow liquid.

“This is, what exactly is it?”

“It’s called a “Rinse.” It is a necessary item needed to regulate your hair and make it glossy.”

In fact, Rinse doesn’t exist in this world. It seems like everyone washes their hair with soap and water. I have endured this for the last half a year. Incidentally, I couldn’t get my head around it for the first three months and thus I didn’t notice. After noticing, it’s human nature to worry about it. …When one only uses shampoo, hair will get damaged. Because I know that, I can’t end it with just using shampoo. Because Iris has beautiful platinum hair which she inherited from her mother, it gave me unnecessary stress.

And thus, I tried making handmade soap, shampoo and rinse similar to the ones in my previous life. Although lotion does exist in this world, it still took quite a bit of time.

Since I’ll be making them anyway… I might as well make related products. I used the roses our House is proud of as the fragrance.

“…Young mistress, it’s amazing…”

Tanya muttered while looking at my hair. As I thought, no matter which world it is, everyone will be interested in beauty products.

“…Shall I give some to Tanya as well?”

“Eh, will that be alright with you?”

“I can immediately make more.”

Although it took a lot of time to make one, but since I now have the recipe, it won’t take long to make more.

“Then, please give me a little…”

Tanya gladly received it. It brings me great pleasure to know she’s happy. Because I’ve been indebted to Tanya for a while now.

However, the talk didn’t end there. When the female employees saw my hair, they wondered whether I was using something special and where they could get their hands on it, and approached Tanya one after another. Although Tanya kept quiet about it, I unceremoniously reveal the nature of Rinse, and they asked for it one after another.

When the male staff found out about the effect, they thought, “This will definitely sell,” and wrote up the proposal. Thus, it was immediately promoted and commercialized by the Azura Conglomerate.

As a result, it is needless to say that my workload has increased even further.

* * *

Common Sense of a Duke’s Daughter - Chapter 17

Mother, is a Cheat

Before the product was commercialized, I sent trial products to mother who seemed to really like them and began advertising the products here and there. And the result is, of course, it has established itself as a popular item amongst the aristocrats and even the commoners in spite of its high price. …Really, mother is skillful when it comes to advertising. And I have secretly given the position of Advertising Director to mother.

As a matter of course, since the conglomerate has expanded, my workload naturally increases. Even though the number of employees have increased gradually and have been given as many supervisory responsibilities as possible, but because it hasn't been a year since we started our operation, it can't be helped that I still want to be directly engaged in it. …But I have to take care of my health.

"…Young mistress Iris."

"Oh, Sebastian. What's wrong? If I'm not mistaken, the discussion with you will take place in the afternoon?"

"About that, there has been information that the Madam will be arriving in the afternoon…"

"Eh? Mother is? But she did not write a word of it in her previous letter…"

"In any case, please instructs us."

"Y-you're right. For the time being, please ask the people in the dining room to proceed to the door, and also tidy up mother's room. Even though it is usually kept clean, please double check it.

Please also change the flower display by the entrance hall. Let's change it to the same rose we use for the product. After that, since I want to serve the new product, chocolate fondant for dessert, please prepare a menu to accommodate it. Because chocolate fondant is quite rich, it will be better to serve a slightly light meal."

"As you wish."

"As for the tea, please serve the herbal tea. Because this will be served in Azura Conglomerate's coffee shop franchise, I want to get some impressions."

By the way, teahouse the name of the new division. I thought it wouldn't be a good idea to keep calling them "Noble line" and "Commoner line," and thus the establishment of a cafe where nobles and the wealthy can come to visit.

Therefore, the chocolate products have been divided into teahouse division and confectionery division.

Ah, however, I left the noble line as it is, you know? Since the nobles love to receive special treatment. When we established a membership system, and everyone was delighted and rushed to apply for memberships.

If they are qualified to become members, they can visit an exclusive shop in the Royal City and the fief. It is a place where they can watch the mechanics of our conglomerate and how we handle “all” our products.

In other words, it’s not limited to just confectionaries, but also the recently established beauty products. In the case of the beauty products, the herbal body perfume created with various different aromas are currently selling like hotcakes.

The orders for the confectionery is also doing well, and there’s a different booth in the teahouse where people can buy food and eat them on the spot.

…More importantly, since mother will be coming, I need to clear out some time off my schedule. I immediately looked at my schedule to verify. Recently, Tanya has been acting as my secretary. I’m really grateful to her.

And so, I somehow managed to clear some time off my schedule and wait for mother’s arrival. When I meet everyone… I’ll apologize to them. I feel really apologetic that everyone’s burden has increased greatly, so before the information that mother has arrived, I will do some office work. Just with confirmation of numbers.

“The Madam has arrived.”

“Thank you, Sebastian.”

I headed to the entrance hall at once. Oh, the corridor looks shinier than usual.

“Welcome home, Madam.”

The employees greeted mother upon her return.

“Welcome home, mother.”

The person who emerged from the door is a matchless beautiful woman with platinum hair. Ah, although she’s my own mother, I really do think she’s beautiful…

Mother, who used to be called “The Flower of High Society,” is still an existence admired by aristocrats and she carries a great deal of influence in social circles. …In addition, she is the Advertising Director of Azura Conglomerate, even though this information is not public.

“I have returned~ I’m sorry for coming so suddenly, Iris-chan.”

She has a gentle character. Although she talks like this to family members, it’s entirely different outside. How should I say this… Because she is called the “Flower of High Society,” of course, she acts like a perfect lady.

“No, not all. I am glad to be able to see mother after such a long time.”

“Oh my, you sure said something cute. Nevertheless, because I wasn’t able to properly talk to Iris-chan before you came here, I feel really happy.”

“However, is this really fine? I mean, it is still the season if I’m not mistaken?”

“It is all good~ The official events have all ended, and I have informed all of the people I have good relations with… Ah, although I received an invitation from the wife of the Leader of the Knight Order, I didn’t feel like going.”

…As expected of mother… Although that was what I was thinking, I didn’t say it out loud. By now, I’m sure that the people from the household of the Knight Order Leader have turned ghastly pale… Or rather, that’s what I think.

After all, if mother doesn’t attend, it holds a meaning that the event will likely not be entertaining.

It can’t be to that extent, right? Might be what some people are thinking, but this is indeed the truth.

Except for official functions, entertainments held by individual households will change their status depending on “what kind of people can they gather.” And so, when the person dubbed as the “Flower of High Society” doesn’t attend, it holds a great meaning.

Even when mother does attend an event, the organizers will feel really worried because they might never know when mother feels like leaving. If mother leaves the event early, organizers will feel like there’s no sense in continuing the event.

Whether if it’s a tea party or a ball, the wife’s ability will be tested… If it’s not an official event, even during the entertainment of the royal family, the Queen’s ability will be tested. As long as she attended, it will not be impolite.

Really, the existence of someone like mother, is in itself, is a cheat.

…Let’s leave that aside. It was impolite of me to think that Dorsen deserves it. However, I do not feel all that sorry.

* * *

Common Sense of a Duke’s Daughter - Chapter 18

Mother seems really angry

“Well~ Iris-chan. You’re working already?”

Early in the morning while I was working in the study, mother unexpectedly came to visit.

“I’m sorry, mother. It’s probably time for breakfast.”

“It’s fine, don’t worry about it. Or rather, I’m more worried about Iris-chan’s physical condition.”

“I’m doing fine. I have not collapsed for the past half a year. In addition, I’m enjoying myself plenty.”

“Is that so? It’s fine if that’s the case…”

“If you’d like, please eat breakfast ahead of me. It seems like this will take a little more time. I asked them to prepare chocolate croissant for today’s breakfast.”

“Chocolate croissant? I’ve never heard of it before.”

“It’s a new product of Azura Conglomerate. It is a type of bread that has chocolate kneaded into it.”

“Oh my, that sounds delicious. However, since I have the chance, I’ll wait to eat together with Iris-chan.”

“I understand. I’ll work hard to finish this as soon as possible.”

Tanya immediately took the chance to serve mother some tea. A secretary who can do anything, that’s Tanya.

Since earlier this morning, I have been looking at one report after another from the various different departments. Ahh… there’s still a long way to go.

The road construction is doing well, and the construction of the educational institution in the fief’s capital is also steadily progressing.

“Sebastian, the calculation is wrong, please fix it. Also, this estimated budget is rejected. The calculation of the expenses is too generous. Please cut down on places where expenses can be reduced. If Public Works department is not satisfied with this budget, tell them to gather the evidence needed and bring them to me. Ah, speaking of Public Works, about that matter, how did that turnout?”

“Yes. The road maintenance and the preparations to construct the public office building are advancing smoothly. Since the materials used on both can be transported at the same time, I was thinking of cutting the cost there…”

“I would like to know more about that situation, so please submit a report to me by all means. Also, please inform the Public Affairs department that preparing the family registers is the first priority. At the very least, I want the people living in the fief’s capital to have theirs done before the end of the road maintenance. In the future, this will be an important document. Please tell them that before progressing to something else, speed up

the creation of the family registers.”

“I understand.”

I looked at these documents earlier, so I guess this can be considered as done? As for these, I’ll look at them later and some discussions are needed… Uwa, there’s still two mountains left.

While I was thinking about it and sorting out the documents, a knock came from the door.

“Please enter.”

“Please excuse me.”

The person who entered was Sei, who is in charge of the conglomerate.

“Good morning Madam, Iris-sama. …I was planning to give a report regarding Azura Conglomerate this morning but…”

“I will take a look at it, please hand it over.”

When the documents were placed on the desk, there was another mountain. Whether it’s too many or too little, I hesitate on passing judgment. And so, I lightly flipped through the documents. I used sticky notes to tag segments that looked important and continued reading. After I finished reading everything, I went back to those stickied segments. …I’m really pleased I am able to speed-read.

“…Overall, every division is in good condition. Regarding the new commodity for the beauty line products, please bring a sample later. Not just what’s inside, but the container as well. After that, I would like some raw materials to conduct some tests… Please convey that to the developers.”

“Something you’d like to try out, is it? If you can tell me ahead of time, I will make preparations.”

“Is that so? If that’s the case… Please bring the materials written in this memo this afternoon. In addition, please bring the account books from each store, I would like to confirm them. I will look at them later.”

“I understand.”

…I guess it’ll be fine to end the morning meeting here.

“Mother, I’m sorry to keep you waiting.”

“It’s fine. Even so, this thing called “herbal tea” is really delicious.”

Mother praised the tea while smiling. Even though I have kept her waiting for a while, mother is really gentle.

“I am very pleased that you like it. It is currently one of Azura Conglomerate’s cafe franchise’s popular item.”

“That is so. By all means, I would also like to drink it even at home.”

“Although that was the plan… we are currently in the condition where we can barely provide for the cafe.”

Tea is a mainstream in this world, and when decided to serve them in the cafe experimentally, it became a big hit. Although a lot of people have requested to purchase the tea leaves, but the reality is that the production has not yet caught up. …Some measures are needed to be done about this. Incidentally, there will be a meeting regarding the cafe in the afternoon.

“Is that so. When it becomes available for purchase, please immediately let me know. I will serve it at the next tea party.”

“Then, I thank you in advance when the time comes.”

As expected of the Advertising Director. Even if I don’t ask her to, she is more than willing to work.

After that, I slowly ate breakfast with mother and had tea with her. It’s been a long time since I was able to spend a calming moment.

“…Which reminds me, how is the state of the house over there?”

“Hmm? Things are as usual~ Nothing ever changes~ Even though it’s long vacation, that foolish son of mine did not return home. He’s probably following the Second Prince and that woman most of the time.”

Mother’s voice turned cold halfway through her sentence. When my beautiful mother said those words with such force, it is a full mark.

“Mo-mother…”

“Though I have yet to say this, regarding the incident, I am, of course, your ally. Regarding Berne… I am angry at him.”

He-her tone has completely changed~!! It is completely out of my expectations. Because of her tone of voice was accompanied by a cold smile, cold sweat started trickling down my back.

“…To be honest, if he wasn’t my own son, I would have immediately crushed him.”

Although there was a smile on her lips, mother, it’s very scary.

“…Come to think of it, mother. What is the state of the castle in the Royal City?”

When I changed the topic of the conversation, mother “fuuu” let out a sigh and the atmosphere around mother turned gentle again.

Because of that, I felt relieved and also blew out a sigh. I-it’s not as though I was frightened by the atmosphere around mother that I changed the topic, okay? It is something I’m worried about.

…Of course, I have an understanding regarding both factions to some extent. However, the information that mother has brought with her is extensive.

By the way, from what I understand regarding the First Prince’s faction and the Second Prince’s faction is that they are currently in a stalemate. I guess that’s only natural. The present King is still in good health, so it is not wise to make a big move.

One of the main people involved… the First Prince is said to be studying abroad, which is

very doubtful. In addition, where he has gone to was not made public. Because he has not appeared in the limelight, there’s no news about him at all.

Although the Second Prince seems to be still living a life as a student in the academy, but I do not have more information because I didn’t look into his school life.

* * *

Common Sense of a Duke’s Daughter - Chapter 19

Idle Talk

My name is Sei. I have no surname. Originally lived in the slums but after the young mistress picked me up, I started working for the House of the Duke of Armelia.

I was working under Sebastian-san as an apprentice butler for the House of the Duke, however, that is a story of the past.

The whole affair started when the young mistress became the proxy of the fief Lord. The young mistress launched a conglomerate, and at the same time, she put me in charge of that conglomerate. I wonder where my work as a butler has disappeared to ever since then… I became the young mistress' hands and feet, met with other people in charge every single day, corresponding to the customers… There was a mountain load of things to be done. Even right now, I am going to send a message via carrier pigeon to convey the young mistress' instructions.

"Oh, my, Sei-san. Thank you for your hard work."

"Thank you for your hard work, Tanya-san."

Coincidentally, Tanya-san and I passed by each other. She, as well, is working as the young mistress' hands and feet.

"How has it been as of late?"

"It's the same as always. What about Tanya-san?"

"On my side as well, it's the same as always. Now that you mentioned it, how's the schedule today?"

"After taking a short break, I was planning on heading to where the young mistress is."

"If that's the case, would you like to have some tea?"

After receiving a rare invitation from Tanya-san, we headed to the employee's break room.

"Please go ahead."

After sitting down on the chair, Tanya-san served me a cup of tea. The drink was pale greenish yellow in color, a commodity the conglomerate has recently spent efforts to make, the herbal tea.

"This is the Rosemary flavor herbal tea. It's good to drink when you're tired."

"Thank you very much. …I shall partake it."

After drinking a mouthful, I breathed out slowly.

"It's delicious. …Do I appear to look that tired?"

"No. However, you are tired, aren't you?"

"Hahaha… Well, you are right. However, I'm still good to go. When I compare myself to the young mistress…"

“I am also getting worried about her. For a while now, I haven’t seen the young mistress taking any breaks at all.”

“You’re right, that’s how it’s been. Whenever I see her like that, I think that I have to work harder.”

My work has certainly increased when the young mistress came back. However, I never thought of it as unpleasant. Or rather, to be able to see how much will the conglomerate grow… It is my pleasure to be a part of it.

Above all, when I see that the young mistress’ workload is more than twice as much compared to mine, I feel that it’s natural for me to work harder.

“You shouldn’t be basing your standards on the young mistress. Because that person is addicted to it.”

“Hahaha, you said something really fitting… Ah, I should get going soon.”

“Right now, the young mistress is having a talk with the Madam. Because of that, she’s probably not done straightening things out…”

“Is that so. Then, perhaps I should go a little later. …At any rate, for the Madam to make a trip all the way here, she is probably worried about the young mistress…”

“That’s probably how it is. Since from time to time, Yair-san will send a report to the mansion.”

Yair-san is the second butler of the Ducal House. However, since Sebastian-san is now devoted to the fief’s management, he is doing the work of the first butler.

“I completely understand that what the young mistress wants to accomplish is very important. However, compared to the fief, the young mistress is more important to me. I think this is a good opportunity for the young mistress to take a break even if it’s just a little…”

To Tanya, the young mistress is her life savior. Out of all of us, Tanya has the strongest feelings for the young mistress. If the young mistress were to ask her to offer her life, she would gladly do it.

“That’s right. …Ah, Tanya-san. Could you give me another cup of this tea?”

“With pleasure.”

Let’s relax a little more before going. Let’s not disturb the young mistress’ rare moment of rest.

“…Oh, it’s been a long time. For two people to actually gather in this place.”

“Dida-san. It’s been a long time.”

The person who unexpectedly showed his face was, Dida-san Although his duty is to be the young mistress’ escort, since the young mistress’ return he has been traveling around the fief giving instructions in place of the young mistress. Thus, it’s been a long time since we’ve seen each other.

“Dida-san as well, would you like a drink?”

“That is the tea that’s been a hot topic lately, right? I’ll drink, I’ll drink.”

Tanya promptly poured a cup of tea for Dida-san. Although Dida looked at it curiously, at first, he laughed joyfully after drinking it.

“Ahh~ this is delicious. I like this more than the common tea. The young mistress is amazing to be able to come up with these things one after another.”

“Hahaha, certainly. By the way, what has Dida-san been doing recently?”

“Hmm? I went here and there with Ryle along with the newly trained guards to patrol the main roads.”

The young mistress wanted to strengthen the public order, and Ryle-san and Dida-san were put in charge of the training of the new recruits. Because the Duke’s guards are famous for being high quality, there are no other people fitting for that job.

In addition, Ryle-san and Dida-san had been solicited by the royal family to join the Royal Guards, but they chose to stay here. In other words, they are famous people.

“How is the public order?”

“It’s doing fairly well. The economy is doing well, too. But because that guy’s training is intense, a lot of the new recruits wanted to escape.”

“Hahaha, isn’t that a good thing? And so, what is it that you have to do today?”

“It’s because I got a summon from that guy. But I have no idea what for. …Well, it’s been a long time since I’ve come back. So it’s probably alright if I act a little wild. Ah, Tanya. Please accompany me for training.”

“Please allow me to decline.”

As a matter of facts, Tanya-san is also versed in martial arts. When she was young, she seemed to have received severe training from Madam’s parents’ House. Even so, she wholeheartedly trained in order to be able to protect the young mistress.

“The majority of my attacks are one-hit kills. It’s a technique I polished to kill the opponent. Because my fundamentals are different from yours, I cannot act as your spar partner.”

“Hahaha, you’re one scary lady’s maid. However, for me to lose?”

“No, I did not say anything like that. What I mean is that our character differs too greatly from each other.”

“Well, you’re right. I have no choice. I guess I have to settle on training with that guy.”

Dida-san drank the last mouthful of tea and stood up.

“Thanks for this. See you later.”

“Thank you for your hard work.”

“Thank you for your hard work… Now then, I’ll head to where the young mistress is. Because there’s still a lot of things that’s needed to be done, I must be going now.”

…I will also do my best. The young mistress, as well as everyone else, are doing their best

with their respective work.

Although the work needed to be done were all jumbled inside my head, I returned to work feeling refreshed. As I thought, a break is important.

The young mistress as well has firmly taken a break. That’s what I thought.

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Common Sense of a Duke’s Daughter - Chapter 20

The Appearance of Grandfather

“…The state of the Royal City is the same as always~ However, the castle is slightly sensitive.”

“…Sensitive, you say?”

“That woman seems to be getting carried away and has recently done various unusual things~… Although that Baron’s daughter is most probably trying to gain influence. When Sharia died, the King has become severely weak-minded. …That’s why at that time, Arya-sama and I were opposed to him getting married to that woman.”

“That woman” she speaks of is the King’s concubine, Ellia-sama. Mother seems to dislike Ellia-sama since the olden days. On the contrary, she seemed to have gotten along really well with Sharia-sama.

Also, Arya-sama is the present King’s mother… In other words, the Queen Dowager. She has the highest position amongst the women in this world. She is now retired and is living in the dowager palace. However, that does not mean that her influence has decreased.

By the way, is seems like Arya-sama has loved mother since a very, very long time ago. Arya-sama will not hesitate to say that mother is like her real daughter. Even though Arya-sama is now retired, mother will still sometimes visit the dowager palace.

“…Although I heard about the Baron’s daughter trying to gain influence… But I thought that Ellia-sama will definitely oppose to Yuri-sama and Ed-sama’s engagement…”

When one thinks about the future, instead of a daughter of a Baron… I thought that Ellia-sama would choose to engage Ed-sama to a more powerful House.

“About that Baron’s daughter… What was her name again?”

“Her name is Yuri Noir-sama.”

“Ah, that’s right. About Yuri-sama… She’s admirably skillful. In flattering other people’s pride, that is. Since that’s the case, it is inevitable that the vain Ellia will succumb.”

“…Mother, have you ever met Yuri-sama?”

“Yes. Right now, since she seems to be appearing here and there, I met her by chance~ As soon as Iris-chan was gone, she has been accompanying the Second prince.”

“Is that so… How did your encounter with her turn out?”

“It’s neither here nor there since I’m Iris-chan’s ally after all~ …However, even if I wasn’t, she’s not someone I want to get acquainted with. I’m no good with those kinds of people whom I cannot see their true self.”

“You’re saying she’s too dream-like?”

“Unn… I can’t really explain it~ However, Iris-chan is fine since you don’t have to approach her.”

It doesn’t look like mother will speak any further… This worries me. Truthfully, since I didn’t have much contact with her, I don’t understand her well. Though I’m quite familiar with Ed-sama’s personality.

“Th-then… Mother. What kind of person is the First Prince?”

“Oh my, has Iris-chan never met him before?”

“Yes…”

I don’t have any memory of it at all. If I have met him, since he’s part of the royal family… I thought that I have would properly remember him.

“Now that you mentioned it, Alfred-sama retired from the limelight fairly early… And then he immediately went abroad to study.”

“Why did he draw away from the limelight so early?”

Since he was considering on studying abroad, he didn’t have to remove himself from center stage.

“When Sharia died, a lot of things happened… However, it wasn’t like it was his fault? After all, he is an amazing person just like my husband.”

“Just like father, is it?”

“Yes. Ah, I’m not saying he looks similar. But the atmosphere around him is similar. As long as he stays in this country, you might meet him someday.”

“Is that so, as long as he stays in this country… Ee-ehh?”

Didn’t he leave to study abroad?! Or rather, how did mother know about this information?

“Oh my, you didn’t know about it…? Then, this is a secret.”

No, no, no… It’s not that kind of a problem that will be settled by keeping it a secret.

“Why in the world is he not showing himself…”

“It’s been a long time~!! Melly, Iris!!”

While I was in the middle of asking my question, the door opened vigorously and my grandfather appeared. …What, Eh?

“Grandfather! Why are you here…”

“I heard that Melly came here. I thought it was perfect timing and came here.”

Gazelle Daz Anderson. He is mother’s father, currently serving the Kingdom as its general, and my grandfather.

Anderson House is a Marquis House, however, grandfather said that the world of the aristocrats is too laborious and enlisted in the military. He was remarkably able to make a name for himself. In the thirty-year war campaign against the neighboring Kingdom, Towair, he was appointed General and achieved huge success. Even until now, he is an existence respected by the Knights and other members of the military.

To explain the difference between the Knight Order and the Royal Guards, the Knight Order are armed forces while the Royal Guards are in charge of protecting the castle. The people who belong to that group are people who received an aristocrat's recommendation.

And within the group of the royal guards, there's another unit in charge of protecting the royal family called, Personal Guards. Because the mission of Personal Guards is to become the spear and shield of the King in case something happens, only Knights who are stronger than average are appointed.

Although Ryle and Dida were recruited to become Personal Guards… It was because their strength was forged by grandfather. As for recommendation, they probably got one from father, or even grandfather. …In the end, both people refused.

The army is a group of people who will immediately advance to the battlefield when a war occurs. When one wants to enlist in the army, they will not be questioned of their background. During peacetime, instead of being in a garrison, their work consists of maintaining peace in the Royal City and across the Kingdom.

After explaining up until this point, it should give one a basic understanding that grandfather who was the only son of a Marquis, should have enlisted as a Royal Guard. However, grandfather enlisted to be part of the armed forces.

Well, if one looks at his appearance, his unruly gray hair, his disorderly beard, and his burly physique, one can only think of him as a Warrior and not a Marquis that he is.

By the way, Melly is my mother's nickname. Her full name is Mellice Reese Armelia.

"Iris, you've had it hard… I'm sorry for not showing up sooner."

"Not at all! Grandfather has been busy with a lot of things. I don't mind it at all."

"Hahaha, I have already let my son succeed me as head, and even if war is to occur, it's not like the Kingdom will immediately fall. I have free time."

…But if I'm not mistaken, grandfather. I heard that grandfather has been looking for people to train every day…

"Still, Iris is looking more and more like Melly…"

While saying that, grandfather looked at me while smiling.

"I-I wonder if that really the case…"

To say that I look like mother, it is unthinkable. …It's probably just him showing love for his grandchild.

My platinum hair is the only thing I have that resembles mother. If we compare our eyes, mine is an intense dark blue whereas mother has soft blue eyes with the color of aquamarine, reminding me of the color of the blue sky in spring.

“There’s no need for you to rush into marriage. It’s alright for you to continue doing the things you want to do. If you lose your place here, it’s fine for you to come to mine.”

…That’s right. That might be good as well. When the time comes for brother to inherit the Dukedom, I’ll lose my place here. When that happens, I’ll be fine for me to go to grandfather’s place… Since it’s possible to give instructions for Azura Conglomerate from anywhere.

“Oh my, father. I cannot let that comment pass. There is no way that there will come a day when Iris-chan loses her place. If anything, please take my foolish son away by all means.”

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Common Sense of a Duke’s Daughter - Chapter 21

A Promise with Grandfather

“About this, it’s not possible for me to take Berne away. Louis-dono will be troubled.”

“Well… It’s not like my husband will be particularly against it?”

“Hmm… Well, I guess that’s true…”

I felt like my head was splitting trying to follow the conversation of these two people. That child is suffering from blindness as usual.

“That child, has he done a lot inappropriate of things there?”

“He is moving splendidly. For Edward-sama’s sake, that is. No… It is for the sake of the Baron’s daughter…”

…Ahh, it’s scary to think what will happen after this, I don’t want to listen any further. Or rather, he doesn’t seem like he wants to come back to the Duke’s House.

“Putting that aside, Iris. Will it be all right for me to stay here for a while?”

“Of course, grandfather. Ah, if that’s the case… there’s something I’d like to trouble you with…”

“What is it?”

“There are two things… The first one is, our fief has newly established a security patrol unit. I would like to ask you to train those new recruits. Of course, only when grandfather is staying here.”

“Of course, it is fine with me. It’s just right since I was intending to mess around with Ryle and Dida.”

“Eh? Then those two people knew that grandfather was coming here?”

“I did tell them about it a while ago… But since they are already accustomed to it, I expected this would happen.”

…Grandfather, you’re too laid-back. If that’s the case, there’s no need for me to inform those two. Since the duration is not yet decided.

“And so, what’s the other one?”

“Umm… about that…”

“Now, now, tell me.”

“…Would you please accompany me to town?”

Grandfather became wide-eyed, I wonder if my request was too unexpected.

“Although I don’t mind doing that… But what for?”

“Umm… I want to walk around town. It’s not that I want to inspect the town… However, I want to know what the state of the town is, how the people are acting and living now. I

want to go to town to see and get a feel for it myself. Because of that, I do not want to take a lot of people with me… But if it's grandfather, there won't be any problems, right?"

During the previous inspection of the fief, I saw a lot of things. I want to walk around town not to inspect but as a regular person. Not riding a carriage, not surrounded by guards, but more directly. In other words, just like in the past. When I think about that, grandfather's arrival is extremely convenient.

Number one, since I will be going with someone as strong as grandfather, it will be completely safe and Ryle and Dida will not oppose.

Number two, when I walk around grandfather, it will act as a camouflage. Although it's rude of me to say this, grandfather doesn't look like an aristocrat at all.

Number three, because there is a lot of things to be done in the house, I do not want trouble people with my selfish acts. In addition, Ryle and Dida has a lot of work allocated to them, and I want them to prioritize those… Although there are new recruits who could act as escorts, their abilities are still uncertain. When thinking about all of these reasons, grandfather's arrival really is convenient.

"I don't mind it at all? Then, shall we go tomorrow?"

"Is that true!? Thank you in advance."

Wahh~ I wonder what I should do… What to buy, and window shopping as well. I'm looking forward to it.

At that exact moment, I heard a knock on the door.

"…Please excuse me. Iris-sama, it is time for the afternoon meeting…"

The person who entered shyly was Sei.

"Oh my, it's already that time…?"

"Iris-chan, you don't have to worry about us. Since we came here on our own will."

"That's right. It's about time for me to mess around with Ryle and Dida."

"Since that's the case, the both of you, I must be going so please excuse me. If something happens, please call for me."

On the way to the study, Sei reported the progress made since this morning's meeting. … Ah, now that I think about it, we have yet to plan for the sale of the herbal tea leaves.

"By the way, Sei. Regarding the report about the Baron's daughter, Yuri…"

"Ah, about that girl. She wanted to apply to become a member, I dismissed her application."

"Oh my, Ed-sama didn't complain about it?"

"I said, 'it's a different situation if she becomes part of the royal family through marriage, but until then she cannot become a member.' 'In addition, our conglomerate has many aristocrats waiting to become a member and they have higher status than you.' When I gave that reason, she was convinced. Although the Second Prince wanted to say a lot of things, she persuaded the Second Prince not to in the end."

“Is that so… If it was handled well, then that’s good.”

“…Or rather, what is up with those people? They should clearly know that the Azura Conglomerate belongs to the young mistress, and yet for them to act so self-important, they sure have the nerve.”

“…They probably don’t know, or rather, the correct answer is that they were never interested in me from the very beginning.”

Un, at least, it feels that way. To them, I have probably reached the level… where I am nothing but a memory, a person from the past. For them, unless it’s someone they consider important, no one else can enter their view… Ah, now that I think about it, the expression ‘Eye of the Storm’ is a fitting description.

“Even if those people don’t care about other people unrelated to them, it still leaves a bad taste in my mouth. Second Prince has been brandishing his influence that it’s not acceptable if we do not give that girl special treatment… It makes one want to retort, ‘Then what in the world are you doing applying for membership.’”

“…”

I unintentionally blew out a heavy sigh.

“Sei. If you’re doing this for my sake, you don’t have to worry about me and address the membership application as usual. Or rather, it will be troublesome if Ed-sama intervenes and do this and that.

“Right now, it really is because of the number of pending memberships. When it is time to look at her application, I will examine it very carefully.”

“It’s fine if it’s like that.”

After that, I continued making arrangements with Sei, but before I knew it, it was already dusk.

…After that was a meeting with Sebastian.

While I was thinking about it, I leisurely strolled alone. The compound of the Duke’s House is extremely large. Presently, other than the main building, there are a couple of gardens and a secondary residence. By the way, Azura Conglomerate is currently borrowing the second residence as its headquarters.

Because it was settled that prototype products cannot be made public, we decided to use that building. I also go there when I want to perform trials. It turns out to be a good choice since it’s also in the House’s compound.

When I entered the study, Tanya immediately served tea.

“By the way, Tanya. Can you adjust the schedule for tomorrow?”

“Do you have something else planned?”

“Yes. Grandfather will be taking me out for a walk around town.”

“Gazelle-sama will be taking you? If that’s the case, then it’s fine. I will immediately adjust the schedule to make time.”

“Thank you.”

With this, it’s settled. I’m looking forward to tomorrow~

* * *

Common Sense of a Duke’s Daughter - Chapter 22

The Young Mistress goes to Town

Now then, it has finally arrived, the promised day with grandfather.

Today, I made preparations to eat breakfast quickly and immediately made arrangements. Since I'll be walking around town today, as I thought, it would not be appropriate to wear what I usually wear, so I decided to wear something a little more modest. …Though I said that, I clothes I've been wearing recently emphasizes more on functionality, and because of that I don't feel like I think to change anything.

When I headed towards the entryway to wait for grandfather, for some reason, Tanya was there wearing a disguise.

"Tanya… I thought I told you that there's no need, what's with your appearance?"

"I will also be going with you."

"However, Tanya. I don't really want to take a lot of people with me during my walk."

"It won't matter much whether it's two or three people."

No, although that might be the case, but…

"Young mistress. Please value yourself more. Gazelle-sama's strength is indeed reliable. However, in case an emergency happens… it would be difficult for him to fight while guarding young mistress. Therefore, at the very least, please take me along."

"But…"

"Isn't it fine, Iris."

"Grandfather…"

"Tanya is also worried about you. It is also the duty of the master to take the feelings of those under her into consideration."

…Certainly, in an unlikely chance that something happens to me during an emergency, it will really be troublesome. Especially when both the conglomerate and the fief is finally progressing little by little after so much effort. I cannot be too selfish.

"I understand. Then, grandfather. Tanya. Let's head off. And also, the both of you, please call me Alice while we're in town."

After we left the house through the rear gate, we slowly walked down the road. Un, the weather is pleasant and it feels comfortable. The spring weather in our fief is neither too hot nor too cold, it's just nice.

The nearer we go to the center of the town, more and more people we see. There were light brown buildings forming a line, giving a different feeling from Japan. While walking energetically down the main street, I looked at shops here and there. Now that I think about it, this is the meaning of window shopping…

"Waa, it's so cute. Auntie. This flower, what kind of flower is this?"

Something suddenly caught my eye, and I stopped at the front of the store. It was a lovely flower with purple petals.

“It’s a flower called Ajuga (bugleweed). It’s a flower that blooms at this time. It is a flower that is comparatively easy to raise.”

“Heh~ …How much is this one?”

“If you want one that’s already in bloom, it’s 1,000 Bells. If you want the seeds, it’s 500 Bells for one bag.”

“Then, please give me a bag of seeds.”

“You got it. Thank you.”

After I paid the money, I received the bag. As I thought, it’s fun to shop for myself.

“About those, what would you do with them?”

“I thought of raising them by the window of the study. Don’t you think that that room feels a little gloomy?”

“Hahaha… As I thought, it is good for a woman to pay attention to details.”

After walking for a while, we felt a little hungry, so we walked slightly away from the main road and entered a restaurant. When we entered the store, I had a hunch that the store is quite popular considering that the place was almost full.

“Welcome to the store. Please sit at any vacant seats.”

We sat down on chairs made out of wood and looked at the menu on the wall. There were variations of meals.

“Then, I’ll choose the set with grilled meat.”

“Umm, I’ll take the set with stew and bread.”

“I would like the same thing, please.”

When the waitress left our table, I looked around the store again. People were going in and out nonstop, and the atmosphere is lively and pleasant.

“Yes, thank you for waiting~ This is the stew you ordered earlier. Young ladies, I have never seen your faces before.”

Someone different from the earlier waitress delivered our meals.

“We came from the Royal City. We have been really busy because of the move, so we haven’t had the time to come to town until now.”

“Is that so~ You guys came from the Royal City.”

“How is the state of this town?”

“Hmm? Right, it is a good fief that won’t lose to the Royal City~ Especially recently, with the changes that are occurring, our lives are getting better little by little.”

“I’m really glad.”

I became really happy when I heard the uncle’s impression. Because it tells me that the

things I've been doing are not useless. Since sometimes, I get scared thinking about it. … If what I've been doing is right or not. Of course, it's not as though there's a right or wrong answer… No, it's because there is no right or wrong answer that I wanted to know. To be told clearly that "it is correct."

I put those thoughts aside and ate the delicious meal. As I thought, it's good to be like this once in a while~ …It's difficult to be the same each day. It's not like I don't understand grandfather's feelings.

After eating a delicious meal, we left the shop and continued to walk around. I wonder if it's about time we headed home? While I was thinking that, I saw a tiny child squatting down, while another was looking around restlessly.

"What's wrong? Are you feeling unwell?"

Although the clothes they were wearing is clean, it looked worn out. And their body were thin overall.

"…I become a lost child."

The girl who was looking around restlessly said while her tears were threatening to spill from her eyes.

"Oh my, that must be really hard on you. Did you get separated from your mother and father?"

"No. I live with teacher and the others."

Since I don't know where the lost children lived, it'll be difficult to help… Now then, I'm stumped.

"Young mi–… Alice-sama. These children, could they possibly live at the institution?"

Earlier… Tanya, you almost wanted to call me 'young mistress' didn't you? …Or rather, that aside, these children are more important.

"What do you mean by 'institution?'"

"It is a facility somewhere in the downtown area that takes care of children who lost their parents."

"Oh my, what a wonderful thing to do. For the time being, let's take these children there."

Grandfather lifted the little girl who was sitting on the ground, as for the one I was talking to, Tanya held onto her hand.

At first, my impression of the place was pleasant as we passed by the orderly row of buildings, but as time went on, the place gradually became slightly dirty.

Although I was wondering if this was the correct place, the eyes of the children began to sparkle. When a building that looks like a church came to view, the children started running towards it.

In front of the building, there was a woman who was looking around anxiously for the children. When she saw the children, her eyes momentarily turned wide in surprise… looking like she was about to burst into tears.

“Really…! I was seriously worried about you two… Where in the world did you guys go…!”

“We’re so sorry, Mina-sensei. When we went exploring, we got lost before we knew it.”

“Oh dear… In any case, I’m glad you guys were able to come back safely…”

The woman whom the children called ‘Mina-sensei’ hugged them tightly. …It was good that I called out to them at that time.

“…Oh my, these people are…?”

When the woman finally noticed us, she looked at us in wonder. While I was wondering what I should say… the children were the ones who responded for me.

“They were the one who brought us here~”

“Oh my…! I am truly very sorry to have trouble you all.”

“No, it’s fine.”

“Although I cannot express my gratitude enough, maybe some tea…”

Although we refused the offer for tea, we decided to intrude when the children asked us to play together with them.

Albeit the inside was every bit a little old-fashioned as the exterior, and repairs seemed necessary here and there, the cleaning was done beautifully.

“Truly, thank you very much for today.”

“No… Or rather, I’m really sorry. Ah, although it’s a little late, I am called Alice.”

“I am called Mina. …Alice-san, where did you find those children?”

“On the side of the main street. As for their actual location, it is in the neighborhood of Azura Conglomerate.”

“Ahh, as I thought…”

“What do you mean by ‘as I thought’…?”

“Nothing really, though I’m really ashamed to say this, I don’t know where the children heard it from, but they heard about the ‘chocolates’ that the Azura Conglomerate makes. They kept saying that they want to try it at least once.”

“Oh my… And so they went all the way there…”

“It’ because they are full of spirit. So the moment I took my eyes off them, they immediately fled somewhere.”

“By the way, why is Mina-san here taking care of all the children?”

“…To be honest, I am also one of the people who was brought up here. My adoptive parent was a Sister of the Darryl religion and managed this church. And then she picked me up, an orphan, and raised me here. After Sister died, I decided to stay here to succeed her.”

“…I see. Excuse me for asking this but, what do you do to earn money? Umm… with that

many people to support, it must require quite a bit of money…”

“Previously, we used the contribution made to the church. However, when Sister died, the contribution has decreased tremendously…”

Un… Well, the present situation is not directly connected to the Darryl region. At this moment, rather than saying the people do not want to contribute to the church, it is more likely that the people do not want to donate to the children. Having said that, it doesn’t look like Mina-san is able to go outside to look for work…

Or more precisely, I should say that this problem is something I should tackle. When I return to the house, let’s immediately talk to Sebastian.

“…Well…”

“I’m very sorry for talking about gloomy things. Please take your time and relax here. I will be making preparations for the evening meal.”

No, no, no! We cannot be indebted any further than this! I was thinking of refusing her offer, but Mina-san left the place really quickly.

…Perhaps I should say that I’ve been really careless because I was busy playing with the children.

When I looked around, grandfather was playing with the children, and it looks like the children really like him. …Grandfather, you’re not going to give them training, are you?

And then, I saw Tanya teaching a girl how to braid hair. Unn, Tanya is unexpectedly good at handling children.

…By the way, while I was being troubled, the children started to gather around me one by one. There are both boys and girls around… I wonder what should I do. Although I do like children because they are really cute, but because I haven’t played with them much, I don’t really understand them.

Therefore, I decided to tell a fairy-tale story to the children. It is a fairy-tale story that everyone in Japan has heard of. Because the children’s eyes were gradually getting brighter and brighter, as time goes by, I got more and more into it. Although I have never acted before, I did my best and performed.

…Oh, my? Before I was aware of it, almost all the children had gathered. When I first started, there were only three children, but now, it has increased to eight children. The two other children were with grandfather and Tanya. Or rather, grandfather, where did that wooden sword come from…?

I pushed that thought aside for now and continued telling the story to the children. …One way or another, the child holding the wooden sword looked really happy. Because it might be of some use to the child in the future, so let’s just give that excuse and pretend I didn’t see anything.

Now that I think about it, does this world not have a picture book? If it doesn’t, let’s immediately have Azura Conglomerate handle it. It will be good for the children’s education, and it will also contribute some profit.

While I was thinking that, I suddenly heard a and loud angry voice coming from outside.

“I know that you’re in there! Hurry up and come out here!!”

…Wh-what is it?

With a deep and rough voice, the man repeated his words over and over. Naturally, the children were afraid and huddled themselves. Finally, with a crashing sound, a stone was thrown.

“….Everyone! Are you okay?”

Mina-san, who heard the sound, rushed to where we were in a panick.

“Exactly what in the world is happening here?”

Tanya asked. Although she’s expressionless as usual, I felt that she was a little angry.

“…In fact, although I’m ashamed to say this, but we’ve been demanded to evict…”

“Why is that?”

“Sister is gone and the Darryl religion has washed their hands off of this place, so a successor won’t be coming. Therefore, that gentleman seemed to have bought this land. However, if we were to leave this place, we will have nowhere else to go…”

And because of that, it has become a dispute. Unn… Although I’m not praising the gentleman outside, he does have justifiable claims. And because his place is relatively close to the main street, the location is pretty good…

For the time being, because the angry voice seems to be getting louder, I went outside.

While I was walking out, I heard Tanya saying ‘Please stop it,’ but it’s not like I can do that either. If Tanya were to go out there, it will be futile because she’ll probably be overwhelmed, and if it’s grandfather, the person will get intimidated.

“Ha? Who the hell are you…”

Two grim looking men appeared to be suspicious because of my arrival.

“I am a person who came to this place to worship. …Apparently, a mass hasn’t been conducted for a long time now. However, this place is still a church of the Darryl religion. To throw a stone into this place, I can’t say that I’m in admiration.”

“Ha? This is a place that has been bought out by our employer.”

“If that’s the case, then this place no longer belongs to the Darryl religion.”

“That’s right. Nevertheless, there are still brats living in this place, so we are here to drive them out.”

“Is that so. …However, to throw a stone inside a church, as a believer, it’s a barbarous act in which I cannot forgive. Thus, in order to prove that your claim is legitimate, please present the deed to the land awarded by the government office. And then proper measures will be taken. To use violence against feeble people, it is an outrageous act.”

“Shut up!”

“If you continue to make a racket, the guards will be called.”

“…In the first place, it’s the children who are at fault because they don’t want to come

out.”

Another man showed up from behind the two people. The man who just appeared must be the employer they spoke of because the men seemed to obey this man. And because the man was wearing clothes a little too elegant for this place… He is their employer, that much I understand.

“I will agree with that fact. That said, however, it is still not proper to resort to violence. If you indeed have legitimate claims, please tell the government office.”

“Hmph. I will let bygones be bygones if those people who are living inside illegally pay the rent fee. Moreover, why would I trouble the government when all is needed is for the people to move out.”

When he said that, I indeed agree. Well… However, it cannot be helped if one is suddenly to tell them to leave this place. To make matters worse, what is a rent fee.

“…Or rather, are you saying that you are the substitute for the rent fee?”

“…Huh?”

No, no, what is he saying? He’s not asking if “I will be paying the rent fee” but rather, “I will be the payment for the rent fee?” In other words, he intends to sell me?

“Please allow me to refuse. …Or rather, what are you talking about. With that negotiation.”

“I will probably receive a good price for you. No, it will be a waste to sell you immediately…”

“That’s why, I said that I refused.”

“Ha. You will be protecting those kids, isn’t that a good thing? The brats’ rent will be wiped clean, and you’ll be able to wear beautiful clothes and eat delicious food. And I will receive income. Alright, you guys. I will take this fellow.”

* * *

Common Sense of a Duke’s Daughter - Chapter 23

The Harvest in Town

The moment one of the men reached for me, Tanya appeared to protect me. In my eyes, everything happened as though it was in slow-motion.

“…Do not approach any further.”

Before I knew it, there was a knife in Tanya’s hands, I wonder when she took it out. That knife was pointed at the man’s throat. It remained pointed at a part of the man’s neck until a drop of blood came dripping down.

“Wh-who the hell are you…”

Because of the unexpected and sudden state of affairs, the men seemed somewhat surprised. However, it looked like they recovered before long, and the employer started laughing through his nose.

“Oh my, didn’t you say that it’s unpleasant to resort to violence, but aren’t you guys resorting to violence now?”

“It’s because of the attitudes you’ve displayed. Violence will be met with violence. That’s all there is to it.”

No, in reality, that’s not what I thought at all… In short, it was an excuse I immediately came up with. Tanya, you couldn’t endure it any longer, huh. However, because of you, I was saved. You have my gratitude.

Now then, what should I do now. If I were to reveal my social status here, it’ll be easy to solve this matter. However, I wanted the security forces to capture them if possible. It will be an advantage to show their capacity for the sake of maintenance and public order.

I would like for them to appear so that nothing will hinder them from their job if the same thing happens to other people in the future. In addition, it will enforce the idea that the security forces of our House are there to protect the citizens.

“Are you okay~?

With an exquisite timing, grandfather appeared. A new person… Moreover, with grandfather’s appearance, he seems to be a person with ample strength, and the mood of the men gradually became resigned.

“…Tsk. Let’s go.”

When the employer finally made a decision, the two other men went away with him.

“…Young mistress!! Why did you do such a dangerous thing!”

“Oh my, oh my, Tanya. You’re not supposed to call me young mistress.”

“This is not the time to say such things! My insides turned cold. Even if Gazelle-sama wouldn’t make an appearance, I could have gone out instead…”

“But you were angry even before I went out here, weren’t you?”

“It’s because young mistress was in a perilous situation. It’s only natural.”

“With such anger… you wouldn’t have been able to talk calmly. If someone intimidating like grandfather went out, it doesn’t look like any talking will be done… Because of that, I thought that the most qualified person to go out would be me.”

“…Nevertheless…”

“In the first place, my main purpose was to be an advocate. The children in this place are also citizens whom I should protect. Since that’s the case, I do not mind moving.”

When I obstinately said that, although Tanya wasn’t completely convinced, she finally became silent.

“About what happened here, I’ll add it on my agenda when we get back. Not because it’s personal, but because it’s some that must be done for the fief. …Now then, it is time we head back.”

After that, the children who were shivering in fear regained their spirits and gave their appreciation, we said our farewells and began to walk back.

“…Alice.”

Not far away from the main street, grandfather suddenly called my name.

“Is there some the matter, grandfather?”

“Run. …Tanya, you understand, don’t you.”

“Of course.”

Tanya, who didn’t say anything else after that, grabbed my hand and started to move.

“Wai— Tanya!!”

“Alice-sama, please don’t talk and start running.”

Tanya led me towards the exit of the main street, where the branch of the security forces was.

“Please help us!”

I, who does not understand the situation well, and with a question mark flying above my head, I looked at Tanya with askance.

“What seems to be the problem?”

“Over there, we were attacked by some men… and then a person who coincidentally saw us, helped us out… But because he is outnumbered, I’m worried whether or not he’ll be fine…”

Tanya, who usually doesn’t have much expression, displayed a dreaded expression as though she was really afraid. …Or rather, when you said the man was outnumbered, could it be grandfather…

“That’s very serious! We’ll go immediately.”

Three people from the security forces appeared and followed after us. …Be that as it may, grandfather definitely looks a lot stronger even with the three of them combined… At

least that’s what I think.

Tanya and I follow them. Tanya is necessary to act as their guide, however, I don’t separate from them because of the silent pressure I felt coming from my hand. …I thought it would be absolutely safe for me to stay in the guardroom by myself.

And so, when we returned to the scene… there were about ten men on the ground. For an instant, I thought they were dead, but it seems like they just fainted.

As for grandfather, he was standing in the middle of the unconscious men looking really bored. …Or rather, to be able to take care of this many people in such a short time… As expected of grandfather.

“Y-you are… Thank you for your hard work.”

A splendid salute. That reminds me, grandfather gave training to all the guards in the fief yesterday morning, so he probably recognizes grandfather’s face.

“Mmn. Today, I was requested by one of my acquaintance to be these young ladies’ guard. And then, though I don’t really understand it, they suddenly attacked, so I did them in.”

I see… We are just another person until the end. Certainly, although grandfather’s face is familiar to them, the fact that I am currently acting as the fief’s lord proxy and the Duke’s daughter is only known to the people part of the Azura Conglomerate Development Department and some of the fief’s government.

“Please accept my gratitude for your cooperation. We will take over handling these people.”

“Well then, I guess I will leave now. As for the young ladies, I will be sending you.”

“Certainly.”

…From there onwards, we returned to the Duke’s mansion without any other incident. By the way, the people who attack us, as I expected, they were people of that employer. It looks like he only left the place because he wanted to call his other companions. They were immediately apprehended with the charge of human trafficking.

Human trafficking is absolutely prohibited in our fief. This was not something I proposed, it has been a law in our fief since the olden days, so there’s no need for deliberation.

In addition, Ryle and Dida got angry the moment I returned home. Grandfather just stay behind and laughed. …However, I still intend to go out to town from time to time in the future. It was fun, and more importantly, I harvested a lot of things.

For one thing, the commerce for picture books was started. Afterward, it will be fairy-tale books for children. I will be giving it to the institution as a present. And the proceeds will be used to build a new institution. I decided that even in the future, the profits for the picture book will go to the institution.

…Of course, needless to say that my workload has increased. However, I felt a sense of fulfillment more than ever because I have determined my purpose.

The things I am doing has no right or wrong answer. …However, I have the power. I can help and protect those small children. No, it is possible for me to help more people.

Since that’s the case, all I have to do is believe and move forward. When I consider that, my hesitation was blown away and used my energy for work. …Now then, I shall do my very best with work today.

* * *

Common Sense of a Duke’s Daughter - Chapter 24

Appearance of the Younger Brother

Now then, half a year has passed since that event. …In other words, since I regained the memory of my previous life, almost two years has gone by.

The profit of Azura Conglomerate is the same as always, excellent. Although competitors have started to appear, in just one short year, I wondered if our conglomerate has gotten so big that it is now considered as a brand.

The reformation of the fief is happening little by little. The bank has become more widespread, and the road maintenance will be done soon.

The High School division of the educational institution has started its operation, and I heard that a lot of students had gathered. …As for the Medical department, the local healers are also actively participating, while in the Accounting department, just as planned, the children of merchants came to learn double-entry bookkeeping and economic theory.

I heard that people have been enrolling to the Farming department little by little. After that, Primary School division was opened. Children from the institute are also attending, and when I went there to play the other day, they asked me to read some picture books.

By the way, the people who were arrested in that incident were sentenced to forced labor, so I used them without reservation. They were just arrested because taxes cannot afford to jail them.

As time progresses, a lot of various different things happened.

…That's right, time had passed by. Nevertheless, for some reason, mother and grandfather are still here in the mansion. No, it's all good and well, you know?

I mean, mother has really good sense, and she has given various advises and proposals to the development department of Azura Conglomerate, which really helps.

On the other hand, thanks to grandfather's training, the proficiency of our guards has increased. Although it's fine… It makes me think, 'are the both of you doing all right?'

Besides, the both of them have their own associates to socialize with, and they also have their own individual lives, right? While thinking of such things, it wasn't as though I can tell them to go home with those reasons, all things considered… Well, if the people involved are fine with this, then I'll just leave it alone.

…Like that, a certain incident occurred one day.

"Mother! Exactly what on earth are you doing?"

While I was having a pleasant tea time with mother in the garden, an intruder suddenly appeared. …It was my younger brother, Berne. He hasn't changed one bit ever since the last time I saw him.

"…How boisterous. Please escort him out."

Mother didn’t even take one look at Berne, she just treated him coldly. Ah, her tone of voice has changed… and cold sweat trickled down my back.

While the employees were urged by mother’s intensity, they were also lost on what they should do because the other party was the heir. Among them, only Tanya began to move to carry out mother’s order.

However, before she was able to approach him, he looked at our direction angrily and asked.

“Don’t dodge the question, please tell me the reason.”

“If you’re asking for the reason, I have already written it in the letter. Because I am currently in poor physical condition, I will be resting in the fief and will not be attending.”

“Hmph… You’re having a cup of tea as usual, so who exactly is in poor physical condition? In addition, it was an invitation from the royal family… did you want to plunge MY Ducal House into a predicament?”

Surely, right now… Berne thinks that he has complete predominance over mother… and has a triumphant expression. But how regrettable. Mother is not someone who will stand for being talked to that way. My evidence appeared when mother put her cup down and gave Berne an icy glare.

"…You talk too much. YOUR Ducal House? What a thing to say for someone who has yet to inherit the title."

It was a strong and intense punch. Nevertheless, it was a sound argument. Berne probably never expected her to say something like that… and in an instant, his expression broke.

“…As the person who will be succeeding it sooner or later, and my statement earlier was said in consideration of the Ducal House.”

“Silence. In consideration of the Ducal House? Hmmm… In that case, there must be a really good reason why you did not return home to during the long vacation to study how to properly govern the fief under my husband?

Surely the reason isn’t because you wanted to be together with the Second Prince and that Baron’s daughter or something like that that you have completely disregarded your responsibilities.”

“That is…”

“First things first, I have received permission from the Queen Dowager to be absent from that party. You, have you become so great to the extent that you can dispute the decision made by a royal?”

“….Tsk.”

Un, this situation has completely fallen into the hands of mother thanks to her tactics. To begin with, even though it is a party sponsored by the royal family, absence is chargeless.

…However, it is done rather rarely. Moreover, the Queen Dowager has given mother her approval… So even if it’s the royal family, they cannot say this and that.

“In the first place, to invite the mother of the girl whom he had his engagement annulled, to an engagement party to get engaged to another girl, their motives are suspicious.

In addition, it was only a little over a year since the engagement was annulled. The Queen Dowager as well, she is grieving about it. Since that’s the case, my husband who is the Prime Minister might not want to go as well.

However… Because your father has an official position, he will likely attend. And thus, this will be enough to represent our Ducal House.”

Ah… So it was finally the engagement between the Baron’s daughter and Ed-sama. It has almost been two years since that time… Before, I was thinking that the two people who have always been lovey-dovey to have waited for two years sure had a lot of patience.

“Exactly what is it you want. You show your face here and then immediately started raging. …I doubt your dignity. After all, there’s a saying that those who hang around people with no dignity will be dyed the same color.”

Berne’s face rapidly turned red. Ah, he got angry~ …I wonder if it was because mother was referring to the Baron’s daughter, Yuri.

“Mother. Even if it mother, it’s not a good thing to say bad things no matter how much you think about it…?”

“Hmph… Right here and now, would you like to denounce your mother? Just like what you did to your older sister?”

Although Berne tried as best he could to counterattack, but it had no effect on mother. If he denounced mother, it will not be possible for him to remain part of the Second Prince’s entourage. In the first place, the Queen Dowager will not be silent about it.

“I am disappointed with you these days. Of course, my husband is also of the same opinion. If you do not clear up your act, we do not mind disinheriting you. And besides, with your older sister governing the fief impeccably well, we have nothing to worry about.”

For the first time in this conversation, she looked at Berne and smiled. Ah, but the smile she has now is scary.

“I’m glad for you. You can stay together with the Baron’s daughter whom you love forever. Ah, however… since you have no charm, after taking your position away from you, you’ll probably be thrown away.”

“…Such a thing, it’s impossible… In the first place, why did that older sister became the fief Lord’s proxy? She committed a rude act towards someone who is soon to become part of the royal family. Other than losing her social position, she should be exiled immediately.”

“…I don’t know about the future, but right now, she’s a Baron’s daughter. In the first place, It is outrageous for a daughter of just a Baron to bare her fangs towards a daughter of a Duke.

If it wasn’t for the Second Prince who is part of the royal family, and you, the black stain of our House, being at that place, our Ducal House would have immediately crushed the House of that Baron’s daughter.”

Un… Other than holding back because of the Second Prince, Berne was also taken into consideration. I guess that’s true. Although it’s unpleasant, when one fights, they are representing their individual Houses. When a person from your own House condemns another person in your House, it will be too embarrassing to retaliate.

“The fief Lord’s proxy has the same authority as the Lord of the fief. In other words, you, who is unrelated to the fief politics, even if you complain, it will not amount to anything.

In the first place, someone who discriminated against his own family does not benefit the Ducal House and is thus unnecessary.”

“I will not accept this…! Please let me meet with older sister.”

Even though he said he wants to meet with me… I’ve always been sitting right before his eyes. I thought that my presence has been disregarded since a while ago, it looks like I wasn’t wrong. Eh, has he… already forgotten how I look like?

“What will you do after meeting her? Ask her to pass the position of being the fief Lord’s proxy? …You do not have that authority. To begin with, you don’t have the qualification to call Iris your older sister.”

Mother exhaled a whiff and resumed drinking tea. It looks like she has cooled down a little. Let’s ask Tanya to serve more.

When I casually looked at Tanya, there was a color of doubt reflected in her eyes. She is probably wondering why my younger brother asked to meet me when I was right in front of him.

And the reason he came flying in here in a rage is because of the engagement party of the

person whom I was engaged to… is probably what she was thinking.

When I see him face to face, I thought I would tell him off and beat him up… At least I thought that's what I would do. However, now that he's actually in front of me… I don't feel anything.

If I were to put it in a single word: nonexistent. Right now, his existence is similar to a pebble by the roadside. At that time, Berne and I became strangers, and I have already erased his existence in my mind.

Ah, however, I have this bitter thought in my mind from time to time wishing that he would not want to return from that flower garden and succeed in governing the fief.

* * *

Common Sense of a Duke’s Daughter - Chapter 25

The Younger Brother's Excursion

"…Please excuse me. Young mistress, it is almost time for your meeting with Sei."

While there was an awkward atmosphere in the air, Tanya called out to me. …It's that time already. Because of Berne's sudden arrival, I couldn't relax at all.

"Mother, I must be going soon. Mother, please take your time and relax."

"Yes, please allow me to do so. Ah, Iris-chan. Can you take this foolish son with you?"

"…Eh?"

'This foolish son,' she's referring to Berne, right? But why…?

"Please show this foolish son the way you work and shut him for me. And if he complains, it's fine if you beat him up. Tanya, thank you in advance when the time comes."

"…I respectfully obey."

If it's Tanya, I'm pretty sure she'll indeed do it. Well, if he starts getting fussy, it's fine to drive him out… isn't it?

"If that's the case… Let's go, Berne."

"…Eh? You are… older sister…?"

Berne took a long and hard look at me and seemed surprised. As I thought, he has completely forgotten how I look like?

"That's right. Who else did you think I was. Because I'm running out of time, let's go quickly."

I immediately headed to the study. And Sei was already standing inside waiting. When Sei saw Berne enter right after me, he furrowed his eyebrows but he soon took his report out and handed it to me.

I once again looked over it.

"…The profits of the confectionery line have decreased a little."

"It's because another shop has appeared selling the same product. In addition, it seems like they are selling it at a lower price compared to ours."

"…It is not necessary to lower the price right now. The consumer will buy whichever product is more delicious."

"There is also that idea of lowering the buying price of the raw materials…"

"Rejected. If you look at the stock value, this price is reasonable. If you lower it any further than this, it will deteriorate our relationship with the farmers. So to maintain or build a good relationship with them, we should secure a better delivery route."

To run a successful conglomerate, it is necessary to pursue benefits. However, I do not want to pressure the farmers in the fief in the name of profit. It will be overcharging if it is

sold at a higher price, and also, I think it is priced fairly.

“Aside from being lower in price, find out if there’s anything else. Check the line-up of the other companies, and then compare them and do a product review. Also, how is the progress with the cake products we’ll start selling next week?”

“Everything is on schedule, all the preparation has been made and we can start selling them next week. The information about the product called ‘birthday cake’ is being leaked by the common people… but thanks of the cafe originally having cake on the menu, it was favorably accepted by the public. Right now, a lot of inquiries is being made.”

The catchphrase for the advertisement is “a special cake for a special day.” Like a birthday, or a wedding anniversary. When they make a reservation, they could decide the decorations on the cake, the shape of it, and the cream when they order.

“If that’s the case, I’m glad. Please bring the contents of the inquiries to me.”

“It is right here.”

I briefly read the documents handed to me.

“…Most of the inquiries are regarding the reservation method and when it will go on sale. …When this is up and running, the profits from the confectionery line will increase a little. After that, how will you be managing the inventory?”

“Just like what the young mistress has instructed, we will be selling the leftover designs from the previous stocks little by little at a discounted price.”

“Is that so. …It will be an ideal to prevent the stocks from running out. But with the current figures and the market, if the drop continues, we will be barely breaking even. Especially those seasonal ingredients, it is best to limit the usage of those because of their scarcity value.”

“I understand.”

“The beauty line is doing well as always. However, we presently… have a situation where the production cannot catch up with the demand…”

“Yes. That product is sold out in all stores…”

“Make a priority to adjust the production of the beauty products. Also, how are the series products doing?”

“That is also progressing steadily. Right now, the Honey series and the Rose series are being sold. Next will be the Lily and Lavender series.”

In this series, for example, the Honey series honey is used to create the beauty lotion, shampoo, and rinse. If it’s the Rose series, a rose is used for all of them. They were placed in their respective containers and packaged together.

“Is that so. Please advertise that depending on the person, some ingredients might not be suitable for their skin, so if they start getting a reaction to the products, immediately stop using them.”

“I understand.”

“After that, please bring the report of all the stores to me. Both financial and periodic reports. I will look at them at night.”

After I said that, Sei said he understood and bowed before leaving the room.

…Now that I think about it, Berne was being really quiet… or so I thought. But when I turned around to look, I saw that Tanya had tied him up with a cloth stuffed in his mouth. However, I thought that it might have been unnecessary. I mean, his eyes were wide open with astonishment for a while now.

When I gave Tanya a look, asking her to take it off, Tanya immediately understood my intention, and she took the cloth off… albeit looking unwilling.

“What’s wrong, for you to make that kind of a dumb expression?”

“…Older sister, is in charge of the management of the conglomerate?”

“It’s because I’m the one who established it in the first place.”

Right after that conversation, someone knocked on the door of the study.

“…Please come in.”

The person who entered was Moneda. Moneda as well, the moment he saw Berne, he furrowed his eyebrows and immediately ignored him as though he doesn’t exist.

“There are some things I would like to consult with you. When I asked Tanya about it, she confirmed that this time would be all right…”

“It’s all right. And so, what would you like to consult with me?”

“It’s about the prices of the commodities here in the fief. As you can see, we have a situation where the prices are continuing to increase slightly.”

“It is really minuscule. It’s probably because the value of money is gradually decreasing, so the prices are on the rise.”

“Yes. Because of that, I was thinking of increasing the interest rate, but…”

“I think it is not yet needed. Although the prices are increasing, it’s really slight. So right now, the main priority is to stabilize the prices in the market.

The consumption of the town will inflate, the conglomerates will ask the bank for a loan, further amplifying the trend. If you increase the interest rates, you will be throwing cold water on the conglomerates who has taken so much effort on gaining momentum.”

“I see… I heard something good.”

“Once more, open the council and discuss it. If you still want to increase the interest rate after the earlier explanation, please give me a reason I can consent to.”

“I understand, thank you very much.”

“…Umm, older sister…”

“What is it?”

“If I’m not mistaken, the bank, is the financial institution that has been established in our fief recently? Why is older sister the one in charge…”

“When you think about it, does no answer come to mind? If it’s just this much, even if you were to conduct an investigation on your own, you’ll immediately find out… With your position, it is unforgivable for you not to know. Seriously, do you have any intention in succeeding the present Duke as the family head?”

When one thinks about it, Moneda’s way of speaking was really rude, but the argument he made was sound, even Berne couldn’t refute.

“Well, let’s give him the answer to his question this time. The person who proposed the establishment of the bank was your older sister… Iris. Therefore, it is natural for me to come here and consult with her. …Now then, Iris-sama. I will immediately report the contents of our meeting to the council, will that be all right?”

“Of course. I look forward to your report.”

After Moneda left, Sebastian appeared and replaced him.

“Young mistress. In this meeting, I would like to make a collective report regarding the management of the fief.”

“Yes, I was waiting for it. First of all, how is the adjustment of the Finance department go?”

“The talk is underway for the reform you want to legislate to lessen the taxes. First, in relation to the product of our fief. Presently, our main products are grain, livestock, cacaos, and various other fruits.

Cacao fruits are strictly produced in our fief, and no other fief is able to produce it. As for grains, thanks to the advance cultivation method achieved by the High School division’s research, we have secured an abundant stockpile. Thus, even if we lessen the tax, they were thinking that we will not experience a decline.”

“…Is that so. On the contrary, it’s a merit?”

“Our fief’s production line is yet to be put in order. Because of that, we can import them cheaply, and we were thinking that it is a big advantage.

In addition, the young mistress’ instructions of conducting trade via sea are now in operation. And we have gathered a lot of ingredients and products that don’t exist in our Kingdom. Because of this, our fief will profit if the conglomerate were to sell these domestically.”

“…I understand. Also, please give me the report of the council meeting and the income tax draft. As for when will be the right time to introduce it, I will give instructions later.”

“I understand.”

“After that, Public Affairs. After they finish making the family registers, ask then to investigate the land. I want them to get clarification on who owns what land. In the future, because the family registers will be a legitimate document here in our fief, make sure they are done without fail.”

“Yes. Presently, the Public Affairs have notified various places in our fief to advise the people. ‘This is an official policy that will benefit our fief, please cooperate with us.’ We

are nearly done and will be able to proceed to the investigations shortly.”

“That is splendid news. After that, what is the utilization rates of the primary school in various places?”

“It has increased tremendously. Besides, one can attend it free of charge. Because there are still some districts that don’t have a school yet, that might prove to be a problem in the future.”

“Let’s have the Public Works undertake that task. What about textbooks?”

“It has been separated into different levels. Currently, the children from ages seven to twelve are in the same class, but discussions have occurred to further separate them based on their individual ages sometime soon.”

“Consolidate the age of entrance to be seven years old. And they will advance a grade each school year. However, an examination will be held at the end of each year, and one will be allowed to skip a grade depending on their results, what do you think?”

“I will immediately make a proposal.”

“Then, please bring the reports and income tax drafts we talked about earlier. …Ah, that’s right. Mother told me to show Berne the way we work… So when you go to the Finance department to collect the documents and the income tax draft, please take him along with you and ask him to calculate the tax revenue of various places.”

Since I’ve been glared at for a while now, I’ve gotten really tired. I’ll have you leave this place without delay. And because he has always been first place in the academy, he should be at least able to do some calculation.

“…Since that’s the case, Berne. Please go do that for me. …Please fully demonstrate the capability of someone who has always been first place in the academy.”

“…Of course.”

With lifeless eyes, he frantically stood up and followed Sebastian.

…Haahh~ I can finally calm down.

“…Was that all right?”

Tanya asked me while she poured tea.

“What do you mean?”

“To involve that man the in fief’s government.”

“There’s no particular problem with it. I don’t intend to control the information of the fief’s government. And Sebastian went with him, so he probably won’t do anything strange.

However, when it comes to Azura Conglomerate, as expected, I can’t show him too much. And the meeting with Sei earlier only touched upon the contents that have been publicly released.”

Although he is my younger brother, I have absolutely no trust in him. For this reason, when it comes to business, I cannot let him touch Azura Conglomerate.

…As for the fief’s government, other than confidential information and the military, my motto is “Transparent Politics,” so there’s not that much confidential information.

“…Besides, Ryle will be coming here soon. Although they’re called Security Patrol Unit, they are still considered military personnel, so it’s sensitive information. It will be troublesome if that younger brother of mine, being part of his entourage and all, leak this information to the Second Prince. I thought that it was a good excuse to have him leave.”

“That’s right.”

Knock, knock… With perfect timing, I heard a knock on the door.

“Please come in.”

* * *

Common Sense of a Duke’s Daughter - Chapter 26

Communication

I have settled most of today's work, all that's left is arranging and confirming documents. Because I didn't feel like eating with my younger brother in the evening, I asked Tanya to bring me a light meal. Mother and Tanya didn't mention him in my vicinity, they were probably taking my feelings into consideration.

The skies outside has turned completely dark, and the dim room is only brightened by a lamp. …I wonder if it is about time I start wearing glasses. Since I've only been looking at detailed reports, it can't be helped if my eyesight worsened.

Knock, knock, a knocking sound echoed in the room. When I asked the person to come in, the one who entered was Berne.

"Is there something you need?"

"…Do you still have work left to do?"

"That's right. It is as you see."

"…Do you always work with this kind of schedule?"

"Since mother and grandfather arrived, it has subdued a little. Back in those days before they came, I would work all day long."

…It might really have been a long time since I've had this kind of talk with my younger brother. It's been almost two years since we last saw each other, and even we were both still at the academy, we had our own entourage so we didn't have much of a chance to communicate with each other.

"…Is that so…"

"Is it all right for me to ask you one question?"

"What is it?"

"…Why did you assist the Second Prince at that time?"

"…Why you ask…? That's because older sister did that to Yuri…"

"You're talking about… the way I criticized her, and spread false rumors. Were you prepared to undertake the responsibility of the results of what happened?"

"…"

"If you want to succeed father as the next Prime Minister, you should think about the consequences. The consequences of your act and the influence it has.

…I don't have detailed information regarding your behavior in the Royal City. Nor did I want to know. However, I do know for a fact that your reputation isn't that good.

Right now, I do not want to let you succeed as the fief Lord, and being the Prime Minister is just a dream within a dream."

“…It is the duty of their subjects to fulfill the wish of the royal family.”

“The role of the Prime Minister is to oversee the Kingdom according to the King’s will. However, it is also part of his duty to remonstrate against the King when he makes a mistake. …Besides, you said that it is your duty to realize the wish of the royal family, do you not have to consider the feelings of others?”

Grandfather was the one who told me the duty of the Prime Minister. “Louis-dono has matured splendidly with his role… But as for Berne…” was what he expressed.

“…To conduct things with feelings and to move because of feelings are both different. I made a move because I was overcome with the ugly feelings of jealousy, and it led to that outcome. My number of allies diminished, and I was expelled from the academy. You stood on the other side and denounced me at that time, but now, are you not also facing the same situation?”

It is regrettable to stop the tradition of our family of having the position of being Prime Ministers. I am still in need of more and more power. While I was thinking about that, I thought I might be able to adjust younger brother’s behavior somehow…

“That is all I want to say. Is there something else you would like to ask?”

“…No…”

“Is that so. If that’s the case, please leave. I still have some work to do, so I cannot keep you company any longer.”

When Berne left, I let out a deep sigh. Somehow, I’ve become really tired… As long as that girl is there, Ed-sama will be covered by a shadow. Thus, it is more necessary than ever to have him distance himself from his entourage.

Knock, knock, there was a knock on the door again. I wonder who it is this time?

“…Please excuse me.”

“Oh, my, Sebastian. Is there something wrong?”

“When I passed by the room, I saw that there was still a light. Young mistress, please do go to sleep soon.”

“Just a little more, please wait. I want to look over the report of the Advanced Division. It’s the result of the farming department that Sebastian spoke of earlier in the day. … Everyone is amazing. Everyone is studying properly and were able to show results… Just looking at it makes me happy.”

“As I thought, the fact that they were able to gather together, have discussions and were given a place to experiment, plays a big role. I also look forward to the developments that will happen in the future.”

“You’re right. Things I did not know and things I couldn’t think of… When I look at it this way, it leaves me with nothing but amazement.”

“…There are also some things that the young mistress doesn’t know, huh.”

“Oh, my, Sebastian. That is only natural. Aside from the accounting department, I am no good with the farming and medical department. That’s why the High School division was

made, to leave it to those people who specialize in those fields."

There's a limit with just myself. Thus, it is best to leave it to those professionals to handle.

"…That is…"

"The Financial department's report. I've already looked at it. We should cut down a little more, or else the negotiation can't continue."

That kind of disposition, it is necessary to think what kind of influence it will have in a long-term span. When I saw it, my head started getting jumbled up. …For the sake of my brain, I need a talented person or rather, an Adviser whom I can exchange arguments with.

"You're right."

"…By the way, Sebastian. How did Berne do?"

"He did the work that was given to him splendidly."

"I see…"

"…Just between you and me… While we were at the Financial department, he asked about the young mistress. 'Does older sister always work this much?' 'Why does older sister work that much?'"

"…It seems like a somewhat impolite question."

"Because of that, it is all the more surprising. In the academy, I heard that Berne-sama is a very bright student. Nevertheless, his intelligence doesn't have much effect here. In addition, when he saw the documents that young mistress was working with, he received a shock."

"You really understand Berne well."

"It's because I've been watching over him since he was young, Berne-sama's expression is plainly written on his face."

Well, that is certainly true. Sebastian has been serving our House even before we were born, and he watched us grow up. In a sense, he is similar to being our parents.

"…In addition, I think young mistress has already noticed it. You probably felt Berne-sama's eyes staring at you."

"Well, that's right."

Thanks to him, I am more tired compared to usual.

"It's because he was observing young mistress for a long time. When we walked out of the room, because the impact he received was too much, he kept staggering."

"Oh my. I wonder if he has matured a little?"

If he received that much impact, I hope he decides to receive father's teaching by all means. Earnestly.

"I believe that it so."

…I wonder if mother was aiming for this all along? Because that child has really high pride, he is easy to understand. I am worried that when he returns to the Royal City, he

will go back to that flower garden and continue being part of the Second Prince's entourage… But since younger brother still some schooling left, he has no choice but to return to the Royal City.

"…Thank you very much for the pleasant talk. It looks like there's still some hope left. Now then, as Sebastian suggested, I should get some sleep."

* * *

Common Sense of a Duke’s Daughter - Chapter 27

Confession Quasi Scout

By the way, younger brother stayed for several days before leaving. He had given up on persuading mother.

…Well, even though mother and the Queen Dowager didn't attend, it seems the party happened without any incident. …Because the two people didn't attend, it is hard to say whether or not it was a success.

With this, the Baron's daughter is now officially engaged with Ed-sama.

As usual, the First Prince didn't show himself in the Royal City.

And so, the Second Prince graduates this year.

Compared to the First Prince who doesn't show himself, information about the flashy Second Prince reaches this place regularly.

In addition, the Second Prince's faction is admirably made up of aristocrats who enjoy being above others… In other words, other than having good lineage, all they are good at is attending as much superfluous tea parties and balls as possible.

By the way, most of the Houses that are in the Second Prince's faction are facing financial difficulties. They expend too much without thought, and they don't participate in developing their own fief. This information was obtained from the Azura Conglomerate.

In other words, to say it frankly, other than their lineage, those Houses in that faction are in a delicate situation.

In comparison, the First Prince's faction consist of a lot of aristocrats who concentrates in developing their fief, and new aristocrats who gained titles after making impressive achievements.

That said, it means that the Second Prince's faction has similar characteristics with him, flashy and like to throw their weight around.

Father, I am worried that a hole will open in your stomach. Speaking of father, after the engagement party, mother stayed for a while before returning to the Royal City. On the other hand, grandfather is still the same as before, staying in our house.

As for me, there is no particular change and is still busy every day.

“As I’ve said before, Dean. Won’t you become mine?”

Those were the words I’ve asked for the Nth time, but Dean, without blinking an eye, smiled and responded.

“Although I’m thankful for your words…”

Likewise, this answer has also been said for the Nth time, rejection. Ahh, it’s so frustrating.

When one listens to this conversation, it would sound like a confession… No, it sounded

more like a dangerous conversation of a madam trying to trick a young man.

In addition, Dean has stunning emerald green eyes, beautiful blonde hair, and a beautiful face. It looks like he also has a trained body, which increases his charm. With his beautiful face, it can only be seen as though he's being wooed… Well, I guess I am trying to woo him.

"HAaaa… I understand. However, I will not give up. For the time being, please take care of me for one week."

"Of course."

What do I mean by one week? It's to help out with the fief's politics as my assistant.

…It all started before mother returned to the Royal City. Utilizing the Commerce Guild's temporary staffing services, where they send talented people to help out during busy times with short-term contracts.

Dean is the person whom we have contracted. At first, although it is a little rude of me to say this, but because I cannot keep tabs on every single member, I didn't know of his existence.

However, details of his reputation and capabilities on the scene had reached me.

Since that is the case… I gave him something to take on individually, and he delivered admirably. Then, I decided to have him undertake a slightly heavier task… that situation happened repeatedly, and he finally became my assistant.

Although mother has never met Dean, she said, "If it's him, I feel like I can leave it to him without any worries." Since I had full confidence in mother's insight and the person she picked, I selected him to become my assistant. Of course, his abilities were guaranteed.

…In any case, I feel at ease. What I had intended and the purpose, he was able to hit upon it on his own. It saves me a lot of time from having to explain it to him, and I can work on other things. When I consider his abilities, he alone can do the work of ten others.

Now then, let's go back to the topic earlier. What I have said that sounded like a confession is actually me trying to scout him. …Although I want him to formally employ him to undertake the fief's day to day affairs… but he would only accept short-term contracts.

It seems like he has to go back home to help out in his parents' house. That's why, he would stay here to work for one week, and then he would go back for two to three weeks.

Because he's like that, I find it regrettable to part with him and his abilities, so I would scout him every time he comes.

Sometimes I get uncertain and think that I should suspect something, but since the fief's government doesn't really have much confidential information, there shouldn't be any problems. …Mother's words also played a big role.

"Yes, here's the income and expenditure reports of the academies and next year's budget application."

"…Oh, the format seems to be in order."

“I made some modifications.”

“Thank you. A primary school has been founded in all regions… and I was thinking of opening up a middle school for vocational training.”

“It would be difficult to do so with the existing budget.”

“Well, that’s right. As I thought, we need to make a change to stabilize tax revenue…”

“That said, the Sales Tax is a little premature. The basis of taxation is Fairness, Simplicity, and Equality. We are currently at the stage where the primary schools are still newly founded, but the literacy rate will slowly increase. The people will start to understand. Large stores aside, it will still be difficult for small shops.”

“That, right there is…”

“Although I said that, I think it’s a novel idea. After the literacy rate goes up a little more, and then, after a while, introduce the arithmetic and spread it little by little.”

“Un~ …I wonder if I should start to head off in that direction?”

Ruffling through the papers, I found the draft of the income taxes.

“To abolish poll tax, and shift to income taxes… I am quite uncertain about that. As I’ve reported earlier, the basis of taxation is Fair, Simple, and Equal. Also, the people have all been participating in paying poll taxes, and have all regarded it as acceptable.”

“Being too equal is also a problem. To impose taxes on a child who doesn’t have the ability to pay them. It can only be considered as shackles to those breadwinners.”

That’s right, I do think that poll taxes is the idea tax.

It’s easy, and it’s equal. But I think that it’s too equal, it is impossible to consider it as fair. In addition, for it to be imposed to those who do not have the abilities to pay them, it will become a heavy load for them.

“…Certainly, there’s also that way to view it.”

“Right now, the draft is about imposing taxes based on an individual’s earnings… But since it will be difficult to calculate the income taxes of farmers, so the plan was to have the public office calculate it based on their ‘Deemed Harvest’ and collect taxes from there.”

“Is it because of that that you’ve asked the Public Affairs to work on clarifying the boundaries of the lands?”

“That’s right. …Of course, it’s not only for that purpose.”

“I see. Since that will be the case, it will be easy to analyze the harvest of the crops depending on the climate year each.”

“Uun~ That’s right.”

“About that, can the public office find enough staff to do those calculations?”

“I told the Financial department to let the students who are currently enrolled in the Finance course participate alternately. Not to mention the Finance department, I intend to

employ the graduates for that sector. The people's knowledge will improve sooner or later, so it would be ideal for them to learn about taxes."

"…That is something that will probably take a long time."

"Well, I wasn't expecting the results to be immediate. That's why I said sooner or later. In addition, we shouldn't just consider the taxes for individuals, we also have to prepare the taxes concerning the companies and conglomerates.

Right now, the calculations of taxes of the conglomerates' earnings are being jumbled up with the presidents' earnings. It has turned out that way because the presidents of these companies and conglomerates receive salaries from them.

First, let's have the companies file separate taxes from their President's personal income, and then have the companies send an application to receive their dedicated tax rates."

"…What will you do if the conglomerates and companies rebel?"

"Don't you think this will alleviate them from paying more taxes? Currently, they have to pay import and export taxes each time they enter and exit each city. With this, when they import and export to other places other than our fief or to a different country, they will pay fewer taxes in the future. …In that situation, distribution will also increase."

"Certainly, it will be able to somewhat moderate their repulsion. Because each company and conglomerates currently have someone enrolled in the accounting course to learn double-entry bookkeeping, it will help when they calculate their accounts. …This way, it will not increase their burden to some extent."

"That's how it is. The conversation we had earlier, let's talk it over once more with the people from the Finance department."

* * *

Common Sense of a Duke’s Daughter - Chapter 28

Young Mistress, Collapsed

With Dean assisting and shortening the time needed to work on fief management, I recently have time to spare to go to town. As I thought, I feel refreshed every time I go to town.

“Ah, Dean! I wonder if it’s fine if we make the orphanage as our last stop?”

“If that is Alice-sama’s wish.”

By the way, when I headed to town, I invited Dean along. Because work ended early… I was thinking of ways to pay him back, it suddenly came to my mind.

In the beginning, Tanya strongly opposed the idea. While saying, “To actually suggest bringing someone whose character is unknown.” But because of mother’s recommendation and grandfather’s presence, I managed to pull through.

By the way, although Dean is not used to children, he is quite good at handling them. Because of that, compared to me, he is more popular. …When I think about it, I’m quite frustrated, but after seeing the happy faces of the children, I decided to hold it in.

“Onii-chan, onee-chan. Will you come here again?”

The child approached us and looked up at us with an upward glance. Ahh, so cute…!

“Of course. Right, Dean?”

“Yeah. Therefore, please be a good child and wait a little.”

When dusk came, I, who enjoyed myself to the fullest, left the orphanage to return home. Un. I had a lot of fun today. Let’s do our best again tomorrow.

Although I took a break from time to time when mother came to visit, but as always, there was no day offs. However, when Dean came, I have recently been taking days off and coming to town.

Or rather, when Dean is here, work unexpectedly finishes early, as a result, it was fine even if I take a day off. As I thought, days off really are important.

“…Alice-sama…”

“Because we’re already inside the compound, it’s all right if you don’t call me Alice anymore.”

With me retort, Dean laughed lightly.

“Pardon me. Young mistress, why do you work so hard to that extent?”

Because of the sudden and unexpected question, I stopped walking.

“You, yourself, aren’t you working hard as well?”

“It is different for me. I am working because I need to do it to live. However, the young mistress is different. As a daughter of a Duke, a daughter of the Prime Minister… even if

you don’t work, won’t you still be able to survive?”

Well, that is certainly true. Among the aristocrats, it is rare for a woman to work. To protect the house and manage the household is the wife’s duty. Even in our fief, it was the butlers and the other employees who were arranged to manage our house and the fief.

“But I was granted the position of the fief Lord’s proxy by father. And to work befitting of our position, isn’t that what being an aristocrat is all about?”

“With all due respect… the image I had of aristocrats are people who do nothing but exploit taxes of the people of their fief, and continued to live that way. In addition, the young mistress could do what the fief Lord has done and leave it all to Sebastian-san.”

“That method, it’s not as though it has never crossed my mind. But as I thought, since I have been given the responsibility… even though I’m still inexperienced, I thought to give it my best. And it is also an opportunity. But now…”

I gently looked at my hand. …A very, very small hand. It holds the life and future of the fief’s people, but yet very undeserving to protect them, and so I laughed while looking at myself.

“When I met the children in that orphanage, I thought that even if it’s me… No, because it’s me, I can do it. When I do my best, if it increases the smile of the people even just a little… If the people can find happiness, wouldn’t that be such a great thing?”

“…You are right.”

When he gave a beautiful smile, I was fascinated for a moment. …That was dangerous, too dangerous. Because Dean’s smile has destructive powers, I really need to be careful. I became slightly embarrassed, so I quickly thanked everyone and headed to my room in a rush. Ah, really… I’m not that kind of character.

…And then, two days later. At the end of Dean’s contract, I collapsed for the first time since I came here. Up until now, I have always taken care of my health… so why?

But because of my high fever, I couldn’t concern myself with thinking of such matters, and so I slept.

The next time I opened my eyes, the room has already gotten dark. …Was I sleeping for the entire day?

“…Haaa…”

Taking care of one’s health is the basics of the basics when it comes to work. I collapsed and then spent the whole day sleeping… I still have ways to go.

“…Tanya.”

Although my voice sounded a little hoarse, my throat seems to be fine. …In any case, I feel thirsty. I feel unpleasant because I perspired a lot and my clothes were sticking to my skin.

When I called out, Tanya who was waiting inside my room immediately arrived beside my bed. And the expression on her face looked a little angry, and she seemed to have cried.

“…Please give me, some water. After that, please bring me a towel dipped in water and

wrung. I want to wipe my body."

"I understand."

She probably already had it prepared. She shortly handed me a glass of water and I quickly drank it. …Un, it permeates down my throat.

After that, Tanya promptly handed me a wet towel to wipe myself with.

…Tomorrow, I wonder how much work had piled up …Just thinking about it scares me. Dean had already returned to his parents' house by the end of this morning. Ah, I shouldn't have rested yesterday… Although I would think that, it's too late to regret it. In any case, today I will fully rest myself, and began to fall asleep.

The next morning, while my body still felt heavy, I dragged myself to the study. Ah, I wonder how much documents have piled up… While I was thinking that, I opened the door and found the usual amount of documents on top of the desk… No, it's a slightly less than usual.

"Eh…?"

While I was wondering why, with perfect timing, someone knocked on the door, and the person who entered was Dean.

"Dean! What's wrong? Weren't you supposed to leave yesterday morning?"

"Young mistress as well, is your body all right now?"

"Yes. Because I was able to rest for all of yesterday. That aside, this amount…"

"I finished everything I could with my authority. All that's left are the documents and reports that need the young mistress' approval."

"Is that so… Thank you. However, Dean. Will you be all right? I mean, aren't you delayed by one day?"

"The young mistress wasn't feeling well, there's no way I can leave like that. I will be leaving tomorrow, though."

"…I'm really sorry to have caused you trouble."

"It's fine. Because it's something I did on my own. Now then, please look over these."

After Dean placed the documents on the desk, he left the room. When he left, I roughly looked at the documents he left on the desk. …There's no particular problem. And I'm troubled because there isn't any problem.

"….Haaa…"

I unintentionally blew out a heavy sigh. …It is no good at this rate. At this rate, I will end up depending on him. In terms of work and other things. …It's like that even now. Because he is around, I feel relieved. I rely on him. …At the same time, I want him to stay.

However, it's no good. …I don't want to feel like this anymore. I realized it at that time with the situation with Ed-sama. A person will one day betray others. Because of that reason, I believe that I must stand on my own two feet.

It has always been like that. I'll accept the help. I will rely on others. If it's this person, I can leave it to them, and I start trusting them. However, on the other hand, how much can I can leave it to this person… and how much I can trust that person, I drew a line. Since that was the case, it would have been fine if they ever betray me.

…Nevertheless, he is trying to destroy that line. He is slowing creeping into the depths of my heart without permission, making me want to leave everything to him. That's why… I'm scared.

I strongly deny that thought and shook my head from side to side. …Let's not think about this any further. By not thinking about it and putting a cap on it… before one realizes, that thought has already disappeared.

* * *

Common Sense of a Duke’s Daughter - Chapter 29

Idle Talk: Displeasing Chat between the Second Prince and Acquaintances

My name is Berne. Berne Tash Armelia. I am the heir to the Dukedom of Armelia, the son of the Prime Minister, Louis Dan Armelia.

“Good morning Edward-sama. Yuri-sama.”

“Ah.”

“Good morning, Berne.”

I called out to the two people who were walking in front. Ed-sama has bright crimson hair color, the same as Ellia-sama, the second Queen, and a distinctive jet-black pair of eyes. With his upturned eyes, it tends to give others the impression that he’s strict.

But when he’s with Yuri-sama, the corner of his eyes will drop a little, making his overall facial expression look friendlier. When Ed-sama was still engaged with my older sister, Iris, I’ve never seen him have this kind of expression. I think it’s because he finds her really, really precious that he can’t help but display that expression.

As for the person next to him, Yuri-sama, she has braided brown fluffy hair. It is a kind of hairstyle that’s rarely seen and it looks very impressive. She also has big beautiful green eyes, and with her constant changing expression, she looks lovely overall. She is someone who always remains positive, at least I think so.

“Hey, Berne. You didn’t stay up late again to study, did you?”

“Yes, well…”

“Oh dear, Berne is overdoing himself again~?”

“No, I’m not overworking myself. It’s because I want to study a little, I’m all right.”

When I saw Yuri-sama’s anxious expression, my chest started to feel really warm. The only thing I’m particularly good at… to receive Yuri-sama’s concern… as I thought, it was just studying.

‘Berne-sama, you’re so amazing~’ If I’m not mistaken, that was the first thing she said when she called out to me. At that time, I didn’t have any interest in her at all, and I’m certain I even treated her coldly. Or rather, I didn’t know what was so amazing about it.

For me to get first place, I thought it was ‘natural,’ and I didn’t even consider it being snatched away. However, to her, always being in first place is amazing because she’s terrible at studying, and she came up to me and asked me to teach her many, many times.

Because it felt comfortable to be around her, by the time I noticed it, I was teaching her all the time. While teaching her, and seeing her improve little by little because of my instructions, somehow brought a warm feeling to my heart.

‘Berne-sama, please look at this~ Thanks to Berne-sama, my grades went up so much~’ In the beginning, her grades were only so-so, and having improved so much, she happily

showed me her report card.

When I saw it, I felt really glad that I was able to help. …Before I knew it, I felt comfortable hearing her high-pitched voice as though it was healing me.

…Even though I have been approached many times, I have never felt this way before. In the end, it didn't work out well, and she was taken by Ed-sama. Even so, as long as she was happy, it was fine… I just wanted to stay by her side… That's what I thought.

In any case, because of that time, before I knew it… I was convinced that I was amazing. I have not gone down from being first place, and I can usually remember things after hearing it once. That's why I thought that.

However, my way of thinking was shattered just the other day. And the person who destroyed it was my older sister, Iris.

When she was in the academy, she was not a very bright student. However, when I went back to the fief recently… I saw my older sister being the director of the conglomerate, and governing the fief as the fief Lord's proxy.

Because of that, I saw her struggling with documents stacked as high as a mountain, having conversations regarding topics I do not understand, giving consultations, and once again scuffle with documents. After she admonished me, she went back to work… So busy with work that looking at it makes me dizzy.

When I saw her appearance, to be honest… I received a shock. I thought that I, myself, was someone amazing… But what exactly does that mean? The only source of knowledge is experience.

Compared to her… I'm just a kid with a functioning head. No… It's probably not just her, there are probably more people. But that wasn't the only thing I saw.

And because of that, I recently went to father and begged to receive his teaching. I cannot go on this way, that's what I thought. Above all, I was mortified.

Under the strict supervision of father, I was forced to tackle many challenges. As a result, I was forced to stay up all night in order to handle it.

* * *

When I looked towards the entrance of the academy, I saw Dorsen there. As usual, he stands out with his short hair and muscular body.

"…Good morning."

"Oh, Dorsen. Good morning."

"Good morning, Dorsen. Although you look really tired… Are you okay?"

"Yeah. It's because I underwent a harsh training yesterday. But I am okay."

Although he's usually reticent and deadpan, but if one was to look closely, he does seem really tired. That said, he doesn't really look that different compared to normal.

"Is that so… Just don't overwork yourself, okay?"

"Thank you very much."

If I’m not mistaken, Dorsen has been strangely participating in the Knights’ training as of late. Dorsen’s father, Druna-sama said that it would be an opportunity for him to “forge and temper his character” and was forced to participate.

…It was probably because mother was absent at the tea party conducted by Dorsen’s house, the Katabelias… and they were subbed at official functions… That might be the reason why Druna-sama dragged Dorsen there. In other words, putting it simply, it was mother’s retaliation.

…About this situation, I only found out this inside story after I went to look for father. Because of this, I remembered what my older sister said at that time, “think about the consequences of your actions.”

* * *

When we arrived at the classroom, everyone looked towards us and gave their greetings. …Well, since she is now officially engaged to the Second Prince… I guess it was only natural that they greet her.

When we sat down on our seats, the bells coincidentally began to chime, and the door opened once more.

“…Good morning~”

“Oh, good morning. Van.”

The person who arrived in the nick of time was Van Lutasha. He is the son of the Pope of the Darryl Religion. The purpose of the Pope of the Darryl religion and the religion itself is to aid generations of generations of aristocrats. Because of that, although Van isn’t an aristocrat, he is enrolled at a school of aristocrats.

“Van, you are slow as always~ You barely made it just in time~”

“For me, I think I arrived here rather early. That aside, Yuri-sama’s hair has become really beautiful.”

“Thank you very much~ Or rather, even though Van is praising me, I don’t feel like I’m being praised.”

Van has shoulder-length blonde hair. His hair is really glossy and is rarely found even amongst women. Long and narrow eyes, and androgynous features.

“That’s not true at all. It really does look beautiful.”

“Th-thank you very much~ I’m sure it’s definitely thanks to Azura Conglomerate’s beauty products.”

“Ah, that place, huh.”

“Yes~ Now that you mentioned it, I finally became a member~”

“For a mere conglomerate to actually keep my fiancee waiting…”

Ed-sama said bitterly while clicking his tongue.

“Ed-sama, you cannot say something like that~ It’s because other people had to wait for some time, so it’s only natural for me to wait as well.”

“Yuri is so gentle.”

However, after being persuaded by Yuri-sama, his expression changed.

…Or rather, for Yuri-sama to become a member… I can’t say I’m not surprised. Such a thing actually happened. I will not be surprised if these two fail to become members… Or rather, I am more convinced it would be like that.

However, “that” older sister, to prevent a dispute between the royal family and the conglomerate, she probably suppressed her emotions and did what was best for the conglomerate… Surely the employees who adore older sister would have felt like they had to swallow something bitter.

“That conglomerate really is very popular~ I am still waiting for mine.”

“That’s right~ I’m sure that their president is an amazing person. I respect that person. I really want to meet the person once~”

“Since Yuri wants to meet the person, let’s invite them to the Royal Castle once. I’m sure that the other side will be extremely pleased and honored.”

“That’s a really good idea~”

…I think she absolutely won’t come. In the first place, the people of the fief of Armelia are considerably angry with the Second Prince. Because when I went there, not only mother, but as soon as I was separated from older sister, the other employees completely disregarded me as though I was a thorn on their sight. Even if it wasn’t older sister, but someone else was president… for example Sei or Sebastian, I’m sure they wouldn’t go either.

“…Speaking of the Royal Castle, how was the talk about the previous matter~?”

“Ah, about the church’s soup kitchen. Of course, I got the approval. Hey, Van.”

“Yes. The Darryl church should also be pleased to help out.”

“I’m really glad it turned out that way~ I’m sure that everyone will be pleased.”

“Yeah. Of course, since Yuri will be the one doing it, everyone should be pleased.”

…Yuri-sama is a gentle person. She made a proposal for Ed-sama to open a soup kitchen for the people, and Ed-sama also aggressively made a move.

However. …To conduct it frequently, they have probably already calculated how much budget it will need.

That is only a natural thing to do. The Royal Family is living the same as before… Or rather, their expenditures has increased. This is because Ellia-sama spent a lot on herself, and Ed-sama has splurged quite a bit for Yuri-sama’s present. Nevertheless, the tax revenue has not changed.

‘If you want to live for the people, the first thing you should do is to reexamine your own life… For example, that in engagement, instead of being happy with Ed-sama’s present, she could have donated it to the people. However, that girl keeps extorting presents, which is ill-natured of her.’ Father said with indignation.

To ask for present, it was still fine if it was just once or twice, but it has happened repeatedly to the point where the Treasury is being squeezed.

Although father and other ministers were opposed to the idea from the very start, it was still forcefully carried out by other, and the expenses started to pile up.

In addition, a soup kitchen is being carried out in the Royal City. …In reality, there aren't many people who are in need of help. Father complained that they are just trying to earn popularity.

If the labor cost is cut down, it means that the incomes of the people will also decrease. As a result, even the people who should have been somewhere in the middle class will also be poor.

Up until now, I've always thought that Yuri-sama is a gentle person… But I might not have seen anything at all.

"…Right now, conducting it frequently will put a large burden on the National Treasury. This time, don't you think it'll be better to reconsider?"

"Why is Berne saying something like that? Isn't it the top priority to help the lives of the people? Everyone is happy, isn't that a good thing…"

"Although it's a good thing, it won't be good if it's too frequent. Yuri-sama, please don't say too many unreasonable things to Ed-sama…"

"Ed-sama is the Prince of this Kingdom. Can't a Prince do whatever he likes? If the Kingdom doesn't have enough budget, it will be fine to take it from the taxes~ Ah, and also, how about disbanding the military? Un, that's a good idea~ Since this Kingdom is really peaceful, the military is unnecessary~ Right, Ed-sama?"

Yuri-sama had a bright smile on her face as though she has thought of an ingenious idea. I, however, couldn't hide my surprise because of her words.

I thought that she seem like a small child. An inhumane… innocent child. If one thinks about it a little, judging from the aspect of national defense, and the standpoint of peace and order, it is something that cannot be said. Above all, what will happen to those people who would lose their jobs. …The future will be a beeline towards to the soup kitchen.

"Ah, Yuri is so smart. …Berne. You are being obstinate. You sounded like a retainer from somewhere."

"…I'm sorry for the impertinent words I've said."

Ed-sama glared at me, and I shut my mouth. …Ah, father will probably once again explode in anger. No, he has been angry. And because I wasn't able to stop it, he'll probably get angry at me.

* * *

Common Sense of a Duke’s Daughter - Chapter 30

Gratitude towards Grandfather

“…Hmm, that child has probably already graduated…”

“…Iris-sama, is there something the matter?”

When I accidentally said those words out loud, Tanya reacted.

“Un… I was wondering if Berne has already graduated.”

It has been two years since I left that academy. When I think about how those members have already graduated, I felt a deep emotion.

According to the story in the game, one year after graduating from the academy, the protagonist will successfully capture someone and it will lead to a happy ending.

It was similar to Ed-sama’s route… where I was denounced and expelled from school, and they lived happily ever after. Of course, if she wasn’t able to capture anyone, it will lead to a normal end, and the current harem situation… did not exist in the game.

That said, the Second Prince’s route is the only one that’s different, because the story ends the before their graduation, so I have no idea whatsoever on what happens after that. Well… the only thing I know is that the situation when I regained the memories of my previous life was the ending of the game.

By the way, although it’s a little late for me to say this now, Berne and I are children born within the same school year. I was born between January 1st and April 1st while Bern was born after April 1st. In other words, we are in the same grade, and Berne will graduate at the same time with Ed-sama.

“…Young mistress, do you miss being in the academy?”

“If you ask if I miss it, then I do… But that is all there is to it. Because those dark days have been driven out of my mind, I don’t remember much anymore.”

“So it’s like that…”

“I wonder if their graduation will bring about fortune or misfortune… Well, I guess it’s a good thing for our House since Berne will be able to separate from them.”

“There isn’t any particular reason for the young mistress to worry about that person.”

Tanya, for the time being, Berne is still the heir of our House… She has splendidly thrown that fact aside.

“Because if this Kingdom survives, I would like the fief to have some kind of pipeline. Although it will be a while before it’s time for father to retire as the Prime Minister… I want Berne to be prepared to take over the position sometime in the future.”

“…According to the young mistress’ words, this country will be destroyed?”

“That is something I cannot predict. Since the Second Prince has graduated, the earnest struggle will be begin, so there is a possibility…”

Unlike the happy ending portrayed in the game, their happily ever after… will probably end. After all, once the fight against the First Prince and the Second Prince intensifies, the country will likely become impoverished.

“Now that I think about it, a letter from Master came. How was it?”

“Un? …Somehow, he said he was thankful. It seems that Berne went to father by himself. But it wasn’t as though I did something, so if he wanted to thank someone, he should thank mother.”

To be honest, I don’t really care much about whatever happens to Berne. If I were to put it in a certain way, he would be someone I would use if he can be put to use… or something like that.

“However, young mistress, excuse me for being forward… But when you received the letter, you seem slight depressed after reading it…”

“Yes, well… The letter also had some information written about Ed-sama.”

I was really surprised by it. As for what I was surprised with, apparently Berne told father some of the conversation he and Ed-sama had while in the academy. But what was even more surprising was the contents.

I mean, it’s that Berne! Berne actually brought up the burden the situation has on the National Treasury… But when he said that, ‘Why don’t we disband the military,’ it became that kind of conversation.

When grandfather heard it from father, he went berserk. “The budget provided to the military isn’t unnecessary. If you want to reduce the budget, you should decrease the number of Knights.”

That’s what he said. Well, certainly, the Kingdom is not domestically stable for now. And grandfather stood on the front lines during the war against Towair…

Although there is no ongoing war against other countries, it wasn’t as though there was a formal cease-fire with the Towair Kingdom, and because of that, we cannot be at ease. Because of that information, grandfather got really worried about the situation and returned to the Royal City.

“…Really, how annoying.”

When Tanya accidentally leaked those words, I pulled myself together. Because she is usually an expressionless girl, and for her to say something like that, I was really scared.

“Tanya, it’s not as though I got depressed because of Ed-sama nor was I thinking about him. However, for just a moment, I was really surprised with the contents of the letter.”

“Nevertheless, it is preposterous for young mistress to feel anxious because of this.”

“Thank you very much for worry about me, Tanya.”

Because I’m really grateful for her worrying about me, I gave my thanks.

“…Now then, we should return to work.”

After the tea time had ended, I went back to the study. After grandfather went back, the

mansion felt larger all of a sudden. …Grandfather really has that kind of presence.

“Oh, my… Ryle, Dida. What’s wrong?”

While I was walking down the corridor, I encountered them right in front of the study.

“I came here to report.”

“I only tagged along because I was bored.”

“…What have I been telling you… you should watch what you say in front of the young mistress.”

When Dida answered in an easygoing manner, Ryle glared at him. Now that I think about it, how many times have they had these kinds of exchanges? While I was thinking about it, I sat on the chair.

“It’s fine, Ryle. Aside from that, how are the guards doing?”

“They are doing quite well. Because while Gazelle-sama was here, he supervised their training daily.”

Un, since it came out from Ryle’s mouth, the result is probably good.

“That’s right. They have reached the point where they can keep up with our swordsmanship.”

“Well… that is wonderful to hear.”

Tanya unexpectedly said words of praise. Un, for them to actually be able to keep up with Ryle and Dida’s swordsmanship, it means that their skills have improved. A while back when I went to observe the practice training incognito, the only thing I saw was them hackling their sword at Ryle and Dida.

…Or rather, Ryle and Dida, exactly how strong are you guys. A little before grandfather left, I remember him saying, “I lost to those two! I must be getting old.”

…Because grandfather hasn’t been defeated up until now, he was slightly annoyed. Nevertheless, before he went back, he would have mock battles with Ryle and Dida daily. And in my opinion, his eyes were sparkling like a child having lots of fun.

“Young mistress… the fact that these two people were able to match up with him in terms of swordsmanship means that if they were in the military or part of the Knight Order, they would be very influential people.”

“That certainly is magnificent. Please continuously do your best.”

…Grandfather, thank you very much. I secretly gave my thanks to grandfather. Though I still have some questions why grandfather would want to strengthen our guards. …Well, if anything were to happen in this country, it is important for them to have enough strength to protect the people of our fief.

* * *

Common Sense of a Duke’s Daughter - Chapter 31

Idle Talk: Various Speculations

“Come to think of it, Alfred. Recently, it seems that you’ve been going out a lot with Ludy.”

I called out to my grandson, Alfred. My name is Arya von Tasmeria. This Kingdom’s… The Kingdom of Tasmeria’s Queen Dowager. The person in front of me is Alfred. My grandson, and the First Prince. And the person who is standing on the side is Ludy. He is Alfred’s childhood friend and his aide.

“Yes, grandmother. I’ve been busy with something lately.”

Although he responded with a smile… This grandson of mine, I cannot accurately read his expressions. The smile he has looks all too natural. If I didn’t live in a world where trickery in is the norm in social circles, I probably would not have noticed it either.

“Even if it’s me, I know about it. Because Ellia and Ed have been perpetrating a lot of things recently, so you probably had to follow up with the Prime Minister, right?”

Although it’s unfortunate, our Kingdom still shouldering the debt from the war that occurred thirty years ago. That said, the debt is gradually being repaid, and unless we do something untactful, there shouldn’t have been any problems.

However, Ellia and Ed pulled it off magnificently. Frequently opening soup kitchens for the people, Ellia purchasing a number of dresses for which I don’t know if there will be enough official events for her to wear them all, and buying a new dress for Ed’s new partner to wear during their engagement…

Afterward, after the engagement party, Ed went to travel to resorts with the new person he was engaged with… The girl’s name was Yuri or something if I’m not mistaken… And she said, “This is a great place. It would be great if more people can enjoy it.” And because of that… it seemed like Ed took it to an extreme and decided to develop that resort.

Lastly, they seemed to have splendidly opposed the Prime Minister’s notion, acted extremely unreasonable and refused to listen to anything. In the end, the opposition of paying for Yuri’s clothes eventually fell on deaf ears.

…In the first place, paying for Yuri’s clothes with the royal family’s budget is strange. Because of Ellia spoiling Edward too much, he has grown impudent and it has become really troublesome.

The budget of the Kingdom is divided between the royal family and for national management.

The royal family’s budget should be used for the royal family’s private lives.

As for the funds meant for national management, just like its name says, it should be used to operate the Kingdom. Take my clothes, for example, the royal family’s budget is used to purchase clothes I usually wear. But for official functions, funds is taken out from the

national budget because it necessary for the Kingdom’s management.

The wages paid to my personal maid who takes care of my daily needs are taken from the royal family’s budget. However, the court ladies who takes care of me as the Queen Dowager, they are paid using the national budget.

To be honest, I’m not completely certain about the difference between a lady’s maid and a court ladies… For example, if I want to send a personal letter, the help of a lady’s maid will do.

But if I want to send a letter as the Queen Dowager, the help of a court lady is necessary. Because depending on the situation, it would be imperative for them to look over the contents of the letter and compare it with past cases to make sure they match.

In terms of wardrobe, the lady’s maid helps me to get dressed up, while the court ladies checks to see if my clothing is suitable for the event.

Although the story has gone astray, sometimes discussions happen whether things should be paid by the royal family’s budget or the national budget.

But in this case… Yuri is still just a person engaged to a member of the royal family. That being said, usually, there is no way to spend either the royal family’s budget or the national budget on her.

“Yes, they have spent quite an amount of money, and even inside the castle, they have also been doing various things. The Queen’s maternal family, the Marquis House and their faction. Because of that, I’ve been forced out of the shadows to find a talented person. And the result is as you can see.”

“After Sharia was gone, the originally dependable King… became feeble and has to stay in his sickbed. Right now, because the information is being controlled, it has yet to be discovered by the public, but it won’t be long before they do.”

“Yes. Because of this, the Marquis House will gain even more momentum.”

“…Alfred.”

Looking at Alfred who is still smiling calmly, I called out his name to give him a warning.

“…Yes, I understand. I have no intention of dying just yet. However, I still cannot stand on the stage for a while.”

“It’s good if you understand.”

“Until all the preparation is complete, I will remain as I am until the time comes.”

“So this means that until you can find a capable person, your preparations will not be

complete.”

“…I really cannot keep a secret from grandmother.”

Although he did not confirm my suspicion, I’m still satisfied with his response. If it’s Alfred, I can trust that he will be able to do it.

“Oh, since that’s the case… you’ve been going out a lot with Ludy recently. Leticia has been feeling lonely. You should talk to her for a bit.”

Leticia is Alfred’s younger sister from the same mother. Although she’s younger than Ed, she’s more intelligent than him, and like me, she’s betting on Alfred.

“…That is, I will talk to her sometime soon.”

Alfred once again gave a smile with unreadable feelings. …Like this, it means that he doesn’t intend to talk about it.

And then, after talking to Alfred about some other things, he left together with Ludy.

* * *

“Fufu…”

When I was the only one left in the room, I thought back to the conversation Alfred and I had. While I was thinking about it, I couldn’t help myself from being happy and smile.

Although Alfred didn’t mention a thing about it… I pretty much knew their destination. Even though they went here and there… In the end, the proceeded to the Duke of Armelia’s fief.

My expectation might be realized… No, because I really think it will be realized that I became really happy just thinking about it.

My motive is to have the daughter of the Duke marry someone from the royal family. … Or rather, it’s because I really love Melly.

When I saw that girl with a doll-like and beautiful features, I wanted to make her my daughter by all means. However, at that time, Mellice was already engaged to the heir of a Dukedom, she was engaged to Louis. Because Melly has loved Louis since she was very little, I tearfully gave up. Because if I were to force it, I will be disliked and avoided by Mellice.

Nevertheless, I didn’t completely give up. If Melly gave birth to a girl, I will have her engage to my grandson no matter what it takes.

Afterward, I heard from Louis that the long-awaited girl was born, and I was happy to know that she was named Iris. My name… the “Ai” part of Arya (Ai-ri-ya) and “Ris” of Mellice (Meru-risu) put together. Because I had not seen her face then… I wondered if she was born premature, but when Melly brought the young Iris to see me, I fell in love with her. Her face was a splitting image of Melly’s. Although the color of her eyes was similar to Louis, a deep shade of blue, but that itself had its own elegance.

I’m absolutely going to make her my grandchild… If possible, rather than Ellia’s son Ed, I thought that Alfred would be better politically. But when Sharia passed away, a lot of commotion happened around Alfred and Leticia, so in the end, she was engaged to

Edward.

To get engaged to one of the royal family? Because I didn't specifically implied whom, some complication happened. I didn't think I had to do something about it since it was clear that Melly dislikes Ellia so she wouldn't have agreed to have Iris engaged to Ed… But I didn't think that Iris would fall in love with Ed.

Because the two people really love their daughter, they agreed.

…Well, since she will still eventually become my grandchild, I reluctantly agreed to it, but I didn't think that the engagement would be suddenly annulled.

When I heard what happened, I thought that my objective has been thwarted again… But when I thought about it again very carefully, it was a chance for me.

This time, I'll definitely make sure that Alfred marries Iris… and make that lovely girl my grandchild. As the saying goes, if you fail twice, there's always a third time… I will absolutely not fail this time. No matter what it takes, I'll make sure they get married, and make that child my granddaughter.

…For that to happen, I must make my move… First things first, "she has been expelled from society," so I must make Iris return to society.

According to my calculations, it will not benefit her if I just ask her to return to society.

Since she was expelled from the academy, she has not once shown her face in society. …If she did come out, she would have turned into a laughing stock because her engagement was annulled.

However, right now, she has done superbly well in managing their fief and is the president of the famous conglomerate… Or rather, to give up that kind of girl, it will be highlighted as Ed's blunder.

Right now, all I have to do is create an opportunity to for her to appear in society.

Now then, I should also make my move.

* * *

Common Sense of a Duke’s Daughter - Chapter 32

Discovery

“…And they live happily ever after. We’ll stop today’s story-telling here.”

When I closed the open book, the children all had dissatisfied expressions and announced,

“Eh~, more, more!”

“Please read this picture book next.”

Ah, I’m being healed. Surely if one was to look at my expression now, they will think that I can’t endure it any longer.

I am currently holding myself back from reading some more.

“I’m really sorry. I must truly head home for today. I will definitely come some other time, so please forgive me.”

“Eh~…”

“When will you come?”

After hearing the lonely tone of the children’s voices I almost wanted to say, if possible I want to stay here forever…

“Although I do not know when, but I’ll definitely return. Okay? I promise you.”

“I understand~”

“…When you come back next time, please read the picture book.”

“Yes, of course.”

After I said goodbye to the children, I headed inside the orphanage and greeted Mina-sensei.

…Haaa~ I don’t want to return.

When I retire sometime in the future, I wondered if I should work at the orphanage… Or rather, I’ve been seriously considering it.

Marriage… That hope has been destroyed the moment my engagement with a royal family member was annulled. Because that happened, my marriage ended up nothing but a destroyed dream.

Sometime in the future, I will have to retire from managing the conglomerate and the fief. When that time comes, I want to live quietly while being surrounded by children… that’s how I feel.

I am really being healed. …Since there’s no foolproof way on how to raise a child, I’m sure that troubles will occur here and there, however… as of now, I don’t believe there will come a time where my feelings about this will cool off.

Advantageous and disadvantageous connections, strategy… not to mention in the conglomerate, but there is always these shadows in fief politics. The number one thing

that the country uses during exchanges are the fiefs.

Because I am no gentleman with a high ranking, I never want others to say that I cannot see what's important and protect it. At times, there are things that must be cut down and I have to play the role of a demon, harden my heart, and cut those down. And things that can still be used must be used.

I must protect the people living in our fief, my precious parents, grandparents, people who are important to me and those who are willing to work with me, at all cost.

However, even if it's me, there are times when I get tired. Rather than my body, it's my heart and mind. What was it that I read in a book… Kings are always lonely.

Although I am not a King, the future of the people can change based on my final decision… No matter what, it is my responsibility.

When I think about those things, as I thought, it is heavy.

Because I decided to undertake this on my own, I will do everything I am capable of doing… That being said, I will also grow old eventually, and it will be impossible for me to continue then, thus I must find someone suitable to replace me.

When that time comes, I thought I will live quietly surrounded by children… Oh my, I wonder if I was being too impatient.

Well, in order to achieve a peaceful future, I must work at it right now.

It has been half a year since grandfather departed from the Duke of Armelia's fief. Berne and the Second Prince has successfully graduated from school.

Right now, Berne is studying under father. The rest of the group are also studying under their individual parents. This means that Ed-sama is also studying his duties in the castle. He has yet to be officially married to Yuri-sama. As to when it will happen, they have yet to make an announcement, but it will probably be soon.

* * *

After I returned home, I immediately headed to the study. First, I will take a look at documents concerning the conglomerate, and the fief government afterward.

"Welcome home, young mistress."

With that timing, the person who entered was Dean. After I collapsed that time, I stopped leisurely going out to town with just Dean and I. Our day offs are on a separate day, in case something happens, we'll be able to support each other.

"I'm back, Dean. Although it's sudden, please give me a report."

"Yes. …As expected, the import and export have increased after the ease on the taxes. In addition, it looks like the profits of the conglomerates and companies have increased."

Since that time, we switched from poll taxes to income taxes to lessen the taxes needed to be paid. Although there was a lot of confusion when it was still at its introductory stage, it has settled down little by little.

Now then, just to recap where the Duke of Armelia's fief is, it is southeast of the Royal

City, and the area it covers is quite large. The climate is eternal spring… and a part of the south is tropical. The east faces the sea, and there are some ports there.

I believe that the Duke of Armelia's fief is blessed with a good location. The climate is warm, and there is a port town. There is a sea that separates other countries from it, although there's a risk during war-time, but right now, it brings in large profits.

In addition, northwest of the Royal City, without a body of water to separate the land, lies the Kingdom which is famous for warfare, the Towair Kingdom. Thus, compared to that place, this is better.

Returning to the story, there is a port town in our fief, and because of that, trade is taking place there more than ever. When I had just received the position of being the fief Lord's proxy, I went to investigate the east where the tax revenue is large, and the reason was because of the port town.

Presently, because of the ease of taxes, trade with other countries has increased. With the previous taxes, not only were the people in the fief not doing enough trade with other countries, they suffered from trading with other towns within the fief. The taxes on exportation has been abolished and decreased the taxes on import. In the future, we will do an occasional tax rate review based on the product item.

In any case, because the taxes has lessened, the quantity of the import and export goods coming and going to other fief and countries as increased.

Because of that, with the conglomerates and companies are gaining more profits based on the goods they handle, next would be the income tax of the conglomerates… We will be separating the income taxes of the conglomerates and their presidents… Well, that's something I'm looking forward to.

…Azura Conglomerate has also started to import and export to other countries, so our profits are increasing little by little.

Now then, when the distribution increased, I discovered something interesting. That is silk.

In my previous world, if I'm not mistaken, silk was introduced in Europe during the Middle Ages*, and it was popular among the upper class… But for some reason, there is still no silk in this Kingdom.

[T/N: Middle Ages span from 5th to 15th centuries. Silk was introduced to Europe, Italy, in the 13th century after the Second Crusades. For more information, please search for "Silk Road."]

The mainstream here is linen, wool, and cotton. I found it interesting that although cotton has been distribution, silk, on the other hand, is not available… That's what I first thought, but when trade had increased, I recently discovered it.

Although I do know that farming silkworms are one way to produce them, and I want the Armelia fief to make it a locality, but honestly, I do not know what silk is made out of and the process of making it so it will require a large amount of time. Because of that, when the tax revenue of the fief has settled down, let's do some trial and error sometime in the future to make.

* * *

Common Sense of a Duke’s Daughter - Chapter 33

Now, to the Royal City

“…Why was something like this sent to me…”

The thing I presently held in my hand was an invitation. …It is an invitation to a party held in the Royal Castle to celebrate the founding of the Kingdom.

Because it is an official event, it is usually attended by everyone, especially those who are making a debut. That’s right, if it is the usual.

However, I have been banished from society, and ever since I have been expelled from the academy, I have never received an invitation. Nevertheless, that is only natural, or rather, it is bizarre for me to even receive one.

“…However, young mistress. The invitation to this party came from the royal family. You cannot turn it down so bluntly.”

Although Sebastian said that, he was also looking at the invitation with suspicious eyes.

“You’re right. …I should prepare myself for the worst.”

“You don’t have to worry about the fief. It’s just nice that Dean will be here, and if anything happens, I will immediately dispatch a messenger.”

“Yes. Sebastian, I’m counting on you.”

* * *

Several days after that, I left the fief for the first time in a long while and headed towards the house in the Royal City. It’s been almost three years since I left the Royal City, and because it’s has been so long, I don’t have any deep impressions of it.

“Welcome home, young mistress.”

All the servants gathered and greeted me at the same time. And the person at the very front was the head maid, Rimé.

“It’s been a long time, Rimé”

“Yes. To finally be able to meet the young mistress again, there is no greater joy than this.”

“You’re being too exaggerated.”

Then, I walked passed the servants who had lined up and headed further inside.

“…It’s been a long time.”

“Welcome home, Iris-chan.”

Inside, my parents and my younger brother were waiting.

“It’s been a long time. Father, mother, Berne.”

“Above all, it’s good that you’re in good health. It’ll be good if you spend your time here

leisurely.”

My normally strict father unexpectedly displayed a soft expression. With just that alone, I felt slightly pleased.

“Yes, please allow me to do so.”

“More than anything, I heard from Sei that there will be another new product? I’m looking forward to it.”

“The preparation to commercialize it is not yet completed. However, I will be doing a trial run of the product during the upcoming party, so please look forward to it.”

“Weellll~ Later please show it to me in secret? Can you?”

“Please look forward to seeing it tomorrow.”

When I said that, she sported a slightly disappointed expression and consented anyway.

“Older sister… Will you really be attending tomorrow’s party?”

“It can’t be helped. Since I received an invitation from the royal family.”

“…However, Ed-sama and Yuri-sama will be attending for sure.”

I was surprised when I heard Berne’s words, and my eyes unintentionally widened in wonder.

“…I was surprised.”

“About what?”

“The fact that you’re actually worrying about me.”

After I said what I was thinking, Berne’s face darkens a little.

“That is… It is certainly normal for you to think that it’s a little late for me to worry about you, but…”

“Not at all. Thank you.”

After that, I went to my room to relax. The last time I was here, I was really nervous thinking about how my negotiations with father will turn out, and after the meeting with him, I was so busy with various preparations that I do not have much memory of this room. That’s why it feels a little nostalgic.

While I was relaxing like that, Rimé came to the room.

“…Young mistress, the Master is calling for you.”

“Hmmm, father is… I will go to him immediately.”

When I entered the room, father was sitting on a chair surrounded by lots of documents. …Somehow, I see my own appearance in him.

“…So you came.”

“Yes. Please excuse me.”

“…It seems like the fief has been doing well lately.”

“It’s doing passably.”

“Don’t be too modest. …Well, I guess that’s fine. That aside, I’m really sorry about this time.”

“When you said ‘this time,’ are you talking about the party?”

“Yeah. Although Melly and I tried to investigate it… the insiders insisted that the invitation came from a member of the royal family.”

“I wonder what they are intending in making me attend? It’s not as though there’s any merit.”

“Or rather, it’s because it will be difficult for you. The aristocrats will be strict on someone who has once been banished from society.”

“Well, if it’s about that, I’ve already prepared myself. It is a situation which I cannot run away from, so there’s no helping it.”

“On that appointed day, there’s a high chance that the King will not make an appearance.”

“Although it’s the party to celebrate the founding of the Kingdom, the King might not attend? Did something happen?”

I mean, it’s the party to celebrate the founding of the Kingdom, right? So unless something compelling happened, the King will definitely be there.

“…About half a year ago, the King collapsed.”

“No way…”

After feeling like I was hit by a massive weight, I instinctively heaved a sigh. With this timing, and for the King to be absent. No matter how one looks at it, the chaos in this Kingdom will intensify.

“Although he collapsed, I can’t say that his illness was serious. However, as of now, if one just looks at him, one can immediately tell that his health is gradually deteriorating. The party tomorrow will most likely be the trigger to set this Kingdom off.”

Well, that’s probably how it’ll be. If the King is absent, no matter who it is, they’ll find it suspicious. And in no time at all, rumors will start to spread.

“Since that is the case, a daughter of a Duke will probably become one of the main topics. During tomorrow’s party, my existence will probably be in the limelight. As for me, I really want to quickly return to the fief and resume my normal life.”

“Ah, that’s right…”

“Father, although you probably have a lot of work left to do before tomorrow’s party, but please take care of your body.”

“You as well. I also heard about. Didn’t you already collapse once?”

“Only for one day. But after that, I’ve always remembered to relax.”

“Is that so. When it comes to work, the body is the basis. …You as well, make sure you don’t overwork yourself.”

“Yes. Thank you very much.”

* * *

…The next day, because the weather was beautiful, I decided to do yoga in the garden. Although it seems like Tanya has given up on the idea of asking me to stop wearing linen T-shirts and tights early in the morning, she probably didn’t think that I would wear it outside. And when she saw me, she panicked.

…I’m so sorry, Tanya. However, it is warm in the Royal City, and the weather is fine, so I instinctively did it.

Mother found with at the same time as Tanya. When she saw me, she seemed to have gotten interested in yoga and made me promise to teach her tomorrow morning.

Since the party will take place tonight, I should probably start making my preparations.

I took a shower and began my preparation. After I got dressed with help from Tanya, she also took responsibility to do my hair and make-up.

By the way… The trial product, this time, is a dress. This dress has been tailored with the recently discovered silk. As expected, silk… has splendid luster. Earlier, Tanya was also looking at the dress absentmindedly.

…Now then, preparation is perfect. Spirit is also adequate. Thus, shall we head off to the battlefield?

* * *

Common Sense of a Duke’s Daughter - Chapter 34

A Certain Aristocrat's Observation

…Today is the founding day, and all the aristocrats will gather at the Royal Castle for a party held by the royal family. As the head of an Earl's House, I've also been invited to this party.

Every single person who entered the venue were dressed beautifully, following the dress code of an official function. Of course, I, as well, was dressed in clothing I had specially tailored for this occasion.

Suddenly, the hall became noisy. …It seems that Edward-sama, Yuri-sama, and the son of the Pope of the Darryl church, Van-sama, has arrived.

Edward-sama came dressed in a splendidly deep green suit. Next to him… Yuri-sama, who entered the hall with her hand linked with Edward-sama, is wearing a pink dress. With flowers sewed on the upper portion of her dress here and there, it splendidly enhances her youthfulness.

Her skirt puffs up like a pannier skirt, with a slit on the side. There were also white lace and something pale pink underneath it, and one could catch a glimpse of them whenever she moves.

Van-sama on the other hand, as someone part of the Darryl church, was wearing Darryl church's formal dress.

When they appeared, the people in the hall went to them in order to greet them one after another. Because a member of the royal family showed up, it was only natural.

…However, there were also people who just watched them from afar. Their actions are acceptable due to the present unstable situation. For the time being, I did not go to greet him either, but if he comes near me, I'll greet him then.

Even so… Edward-sama didn't come here as a sponsor but as an attendant. Surely, even though he has yet to ascend the throne, he has been pressured to do so by Ellia-sama and her House. Well, since the person in question is conversing with Yuri-sama normally, he might not mind it at all.

While I was thinking that, the surrounding became as rowdy as the time Edward-sama made his appearance. The people who arrived is the Duke of Armelia and the Prime Minister, Louis-sama, and his wife, Mellice-sama.

As usual, Mellice-sama looks beautiful. Today, she was dressed in the height of fashion, matching her light blue eyes… a dark blue gown. Really, as expected of someone who was given the title of "The Flower of Society," she is beautiful.

Regardless if it was a man or a woman, they went to greet the couple. The two of them were most likely already used to it and tactfully returned the greetings.

Soon after, the surrounding of the entrance of the hall became even more rowdy. I, as well, directed my line of sight away from the Duke and Duchess.

At that place, was the Duke's son, Berne Tash Armelia, and the girl he was escorting. That girl attracted the eyes of all the people in the hall. Similarly, I was also one of the people who was admiring her.

…Beautiful. That word occupied my entire head. She had silver glossy hair that seems to shine even more under the light. She has well sculpted facial features, and skin as white as porcelain. With deep blue eyes, similar to the finest sapphire.

And the dress she was wearing was glossy in addition to having some kind of luster… I wonder what kind of cloth it's made out of. At the very least, I have never seen such fabric before.

And that thin beige dress tailored from that kind of fabric, is a dress completely of a different style from all the dresses found in this place. First of all, the dress has no puffy sleeves, and rather than being in a form of an hourglass, it is shaped with like a curved line similar to the letter "S"… In addition, rather than having a skirt with volume, it has a refreshing looking narrow skirt.

With her slender figure, the dress suited her really well. And the skirt was finished with an elaborate embroidery done with blue and silver thread. And to polish her look, she had a deep blue sash, similar to the color of her eyes.

She seems to illuminate under the lights, and with her delicate frame… she looked like the Goddess of the Moon. Holding that sort of impression, I couldn't separate my eyes from her.

…Exactly who in the world is that girl? Such a beautiful woman, I would never forget her after seeing her once.

While bathing in the eyes of the people in the hall, she walked deep into the hall. And then, she stopped right in front of the Duke and Duchess of Armelia and started a conversation.

…Is she someone from the Duke of Armelia's House…? Now that I think about it, her appearance looks really similar to Mellice-sama…

Impossible, is she really Iris Lana Armelia-sama, the daughter of Duke Armelia? No, the difference in appearance is too excessive… In addition, after her engagement with Edward-sama was annulled, she should not be able to attend any parties. If that's so, then…?

While I was thinking of that question inside my head, another door opened. The person who arrived was the Queen Dowager… Queen Dowager? Not the King but the Queen Dowager…? But at the time when the organizer made an appearance, I suddenly remembered something.

Before the King rose to the throne, she was once the Queen who dominated this Kingdom. This was because when her elder brother, the Crown Prince, died, she became the only direct descendant of the royal family. However, because it was unprecedented for a woman to take the throne, she married a Duke and had him assume the role of the King.

During that era, rather than the King, it was the Queen who appeared time and time again and acted as the organizer. Therefore, I feel nostalgic looking at the current spectacle.

When the previous King, her husband, passed away and her son, the present King, rose to the throne, and she quickly backed away.

And when the King married and the Earl's daughter, the Queen then became the Queen Dowager and retired to the Queen Dowager's palace.

Since then, she hasn't been participating much in these kinds of events… Really, I wonder if something happened.

Naturally, there were others who remembered the past and lowered their heads. I was also one of those people.

She accepted our greetings with a smile and sat at the seat reserved for the royal family. At the same time, the music started playing and the party began.

For some reason, the Queen Dowager was looking at the mystery woman Berne-sama brought, who was currently engrossed in a conversation.

Suddenly, the mysterious woman began to move. Apparently, she was called by the Queen Dowager. When she was in the vicinity of where the Queen Dowager was sitting, all of us had already forgotten our own conversations and perked our ears to listen to theirs.

"The Duke of Armelia's daughter, Iris Lana Armelia. I have been looking forward to the day I finally meet you. And thus, I have invited you to today's party."

When we heard the Queen Dowager's words, a shock ran through us. As I thought, she was the eldest child of the Duke of Armelia, "the woman" involved in that event…

To think that it was the Queen Dowager who had personally invited her, we couldn't hide our surprise.

What in the world was the Queen Dowager thinking about…

"You have achieved spectacular success as the President of Azura Conglomerate, and I've also heard about the splendid work you have done in managing the fief as the fief Lord's proxy. I hope you enjoy yourself today."

When the Queen Dowager said those words, all of us received an even greater blow.

She was the person who is operating "that" Azura Conglomerate? In addition, she was managing the fief as the fief Lord's proxy!

Speaking of Azura Conglomerate, it is a popular conglomerate in the Kingdom, large enough to fight over the first or second spot.

Although it has only been recently established, not even three years old… nevertheless, with conglomerate's excellent management and unprecedented product line-up, they quickly gained attention. Their chocolate products is a great favorite of mine, and my family is using their beauty products.

"…If you're troubled with anything, please feel free to consult with me, anything is fine."

"…It is my great honor."

With beautiful movements, she expressed her gratitude and withdrew. Although only three to four sentences were said during the conversation, because the organizer must talk with

various other people, this was only natural.

When she withdrew, the next person was called.

She once again returned to being a wallflower. The person probably wanted to remain inconspicuous… however, everyone was glancing at her.

With just that exchange alone, everyone was aware that her value had become immeasurable.

First of all, her appeal of being the President of Azura Conglomerate. With ample funds and assets, she is an existence that can’t be ignored.

However, above all… she has the support of the Queen Dowager. She was summoned by the noblest of all nobles in the Kingdom, and she was asked to consult with the Queen Dowager about any matter. The royal family… to receive the backing of the person with the most influence in a place like this is an honor.

Now that it has come to this, why did Edward-sama annulled his engagement with her… After all, with her beautiful appearance, talent, lineage, and backing… No matter how one looks at it, she’s attractive.

Or rather, if he really wants to ascend the throne, she is someone he would want to draw in. To actually ignore the lady, annulled his engagement with her, and immediately get engaged to another girl, if anything, it was too malicious.

At the very least, the neutral people will sneer in secret while the First Prince faction will probably gloat about this. And the people in the Second Prince’s faction, after having let go of such a big fish, I guess they would probably end up gritting their teeth.

Right now, everyone wants to get acquainted with her and were looking for the perfect timing to do so. However, she is always in a conversation with one of her family members, and because of that, it’s hard to find the right timing.

“Huh, it’s been a long time, hasn’t it~”

While the others were thinking of strategies, a girl who couldn’t read the atmosphere made such remarks.

* * *

Common Sense of a Duke’s Daughter - Chapter 35

Assistance of the Queen Dowager

Right now, I am in the middle of a mayhem.

…It is currently the party to commemorate the founding of the Kingdom. I thought it was strange for me to be invited, and when I arrived at the venue, I resolved myself and entered the place.

However, when I entered, rather than receiving cold gazes from the people, they looked at me with curiosity and interest. At this time, I thought, “Huh? It is different from what I had been expecting…”

And when I received a summon from the Queen Dowager, I didn’t think that she would say kind words and give me her support. Huh? Could it be that the person who invited me was the Queen Dowager… that’s what I believed.

Since my mission for today has ended, I heaved a sigh and calmly walked to a corner.

However, I didn’t think that Yuri-sama would appear right in front of me. …In addition, standing next to her was the grumpy looking Ed-sama, and Van-sama who was looking at me curiously.

“…It’s been a long time.”

For the time being, I replied with a smile. …It doesn’t look stiff, does it?

“Iris-sama, it’s been a long time since you have not attended the academy~ I’m glad to see that you’re looking energetic~”

Huh, sarcasm? Was that sarcasm? Or is she simply saying that because she’s worried about me? Since the opponent is Yuri-sama, I hesitate to make any judgment…

“It is a good thing that Yuri-sama is also looking well.”

For the time being, I made a harmless remark.

“…I’m surprised. To think that it’s actually Iris-sama.”

Van-sama who was standing on the side made a comment.

“Didn’t I tell you so? I’m really good at distinguishing a person’s face. In addition, she’s together with Berne, so I thought she’s definitely Iris-sama.”

Yuri-sama said proudly… even though she was at that place when it all happened. Together with Berne, you were there driving me out with all your might!

Even so, you’ve changed too much. I didn’t notice at all.”

“Yuri is really smart.”

“Fufufu… Thank you very much, Edward-sama.”

….Yes, yes. As usual, you guys are surrounded with “kyakya ufufufu” pink atmosphere. To actually act that way in front of your previous fiancee, you really lack consideration.

On the other hand, I've already given up a lot of things to Yuri-sama… Besides, I wonder if Edward-sama has always been this happy? While I was wondering that, a doubt immediately arose within me after remembering the last words I said at the academy.

"…By the way, why is Iris-sama making an appearance here today~?"

I didn't expect a sudden punch from Yuri-sama, and within a moment, the smile on my face disappeared.

"Why, you ask…?"

"Because Iris-sama…"

"There's no need for you to ask her why she's asking you that question. Because you do not have any position to make an appearance at this place."

Interrupting what Yuri-sama was saying, Edward-sama said while looking at me with hatred. Even if you don't glare at me that much, it's not as though I would eat her.

"No position…"

"It's because Yuri is gentle. She's giving you a piece of advice to remind you of your position."

Or rather, listen to the other person's story first! In addition, why are you being so boastful?

"…Advice?"

On the other hand, Yuri-sama doesn't seem to understand what Ed-sama said and a question mark appeared on top of her head.

"…The reason I am in this place is because I received an invitation from the Queen Dowager. With or without any position, it is my duty, as a subject, to play my part."

"Wha…! Grandmother did…?"

Ed-sama looked really surprised and his eyes widened. Were you not paying any attention when I went to greet the Queen Dowager a little while ago?

"No, that's impossible… To someone as inhumane as you, there's no way grandmother will send you an invitation. If you want to tell a lie, make it a little more believable."

Although you are not convinced… those words are not something you should say to someone who you were once engaged with… When I was about to say something, Yuri-sama said something before me.

"…Umm~ What have you two people been talking about? I don't really understand it~…"

"…Haaa…"

With Yuri-sama's words, his anger immediately lessened. You don't understand it well? It was you who brought up this topic in the first place.

"About the thing I wanted to ask~… Why Iris-sama came here in person… Is it because Iris-sama wants to advertise that dress today~ At least that's what I was thinking~"

"…Advertisement?"

“Yes~ Because Iris-sama is someone from the Duke of Armelia’s House, right? If you think about the Duke of Armelia’s fief, then Azura Conglomerate will naturally come to mind. What I wanted to hear is if Iris-sama was asked by the Azura Conglomerate to wear that dress and come here to advertise.”

I wasn’t asked to do it or anything, after all, I am the President of Azura Conglomerate. As I thought, they didn’t know that I am the president of that conglomerate… Then, I remembered the chaos that occurred when I was talking to Sei and was told that these two people wanted to apply to become members.

“No… I wasn’t asked to advertise it or anything… but it is the truth that fabric used for this dress will be introduced as a new commodity.”

“Oh, as I thought~! It’s really beautiful. I would also want to have a dress tailored in this fabric. Where can I buy it?”

Leaving Ed-sama aside, Yuri-sama advances her conversation with me.

“Because we have yet to gather a lot of materials, it is currently not up for sale. But we’ll have enough materials soon enough, and a product line will be launched soon after.”

“Oh, is that so~ Because it looks really wonderful, I want one by all means… That’s what I was thinking. Is there anything you can do?”

“Although I am glad about your praise… however, we really do need more time, so pardon us.”

After all, it is being exported from another country, so the price is quite high. I thought that it can’t be helped since it’s silk, but thinking about the costs such as transportation, there’s a deficit.

Because of that, it doesn’t look like the conglomerate will be able to market it on a large scale… Even if we were to sell it at a high price, there’s not enough fabric. This time, I only made this dress because it was necessary.

“Eh~… But…”

“Th-that’s right. Yuri who will soon become a member of the royal family wishes it. It will be an honor for the conglomerate, and it’s their duty to immediately fulfill it.”

“Even if you say so, what’s impossible is impossible.”

“I-impenitent…!”

Ed-sama said with his face bright red. Fortunately, most people didn’t seem to hear our conversation because they were involved in conversations of their own, and also thanks to the music orchestral playing… Nevertheless, the people who were just nearby heard everything. Ah, how troublesome.

“…It’s really rowdy, isn’t it. What is going on?”

Mother suddenly appeared behind me.

“Ah, Duchess of Armelia. It’s been a long time~”

“…”

Splendidly ignoring Yuri-sama's greeting, she walked towards me.

"Are you alright?"

"Eh… I'm doing fine, mother. To cause such a racket, I'm really sorry to worry you."

"Duchess of Armelia!"

With the same tone as earlier, Ed-sama called out to my mother. Ah, a wrinkle suddenly appeared in the middle of mother's forehead.

"Oh, Your Highness. Why are you speaking in such a loud voice in the middle of a party?"

"Under this circumstances… Why did you disregard Yuri! This is a blasphemy against the royal family."

"Well, Your Highness. Surely you jest. …I'm certain you haven't forgotten the manners of the court, have you?"

Mother unfolded her fan and covered her mouth with it. On the other side of her fan, I'm sure she's blowing a big sigh.

"For a person who has a lower social position to carefreely address a person of higher social standing, the people in the surrounding will question the fineness of that person. If Yuri-sama is to become your princess… No, because of this reason, she should be well informed of such manners."

Mother quietly looked at Ed-sama and Yuri-sama's appearance.

"However, Yuri is the person who is engaged to me."

"Yes, that she is. Although she's someone you are engaged to, it doesn't mean you have been formally married… In other words, she is not part of your House. Until then, her position will stay the same. …Before you get married, no one knows what will happen until then."

Mother suddenly glanced towards me. Yes, that's right. It is the truth that I had my engagement annulled.

"I don't think social status is related. When someone greets you, you should return the greeting. Isn't this the most natural thing to do~?"

"…"

Mother and I… No, everyone in the surroundings was dumbfounded. No, Ed-sama and Van-sama were not stunned at all.

A natural thing… to do. To say such things in a world of aristocrats where manners and formalities are essential is a serious offense. With the King on the top, the rest of the aristocrats are under him in a shape of a pyramid.

In Japan, it is proprietary to greet people and return the greeting of someone else. However, there are various ways and manners to greet and return a greeting, and that identically exists in this world.

"Yuri-sama. As someone who might become a member of the royal family, you need to learn how to conduct yourself."

“It is as Mellice says.”

I thought that a new person is making an appearance, I didn’t think that it would be the Queen Dowager.

“Grandmother…!?”

“Queen Dowager, is it fine for you to leave your seat and come here?”

While Ed-sama was surprised that she made an appearance, mother, on the other hand, inquired nonchalantly.

“It’s fine. The greetings have pretty much ended. That said, Iris. Let’s go over there, and please let me hear the story of what you have been up to recently. Mellice, will you be coming as well?”

“Yes, I will come.”

“Is that so. The Duke of Armelia and the Marquis of Anderson are already there waiting for you. Please be my conversational partner.”

“Certainly.”

“Since you’ll be the only one left here, Berne, come with us to where the Duke of Armelia is.”

“Yes.”

When we were about to take our leave, Ed-sama once again called out.

“Grandmother…!”

“What is it? You’re being too rowdy. …In this party, there are also people from other countries in attendance, so what’s with your awful state. You people, retire and cool your heads. Because with your appearance, the fineness of our Kingdom will be questioned.”

However, the Queen Dowager treated him coldly, and walked away, leading the four of us. The passing attendees looked at the expression on the faces of Ed-sama and the others… However, Ed-sama and Yuri-sama stood there with a blank surprise.

After that, the Queen Dowager returned to the seat reserved for the royal family. The people around her were people with high social status and distinguished guests from other countries, such as grandfather who is considered this Kingdom’s strongest military general, and important key figures involved in the Royal Court, and this impressive gathering of eminent and powerful members were smiling and laughing.

For these members to attend this party held by the Queen Dowager shows that even until now, the Queen Dowager’s influence is still as powerful as ever.

I wonder if it’s good that I came… that’s what I was thinking. Because I didn’t want to be at that place, I quietly stayed beside the Queen Dowager and conversed with her.

* * *

Common Sense of a Duke’s Daughter - Chapter 36

Various Speculations II

“…I guess his status has dropped.”

I spoke of the details of the party that happened the other day with Alfred who is currently in front of me. However, because it’s been a long time since I made an appearance at a party, I was really tired.

“If Ellia and her maternal house also made a move, I think it would have been more interesting. However, Ellia was busy greeting other aristocrats… She was too absorbed, frantically greeting and soliciting them to increase their influence that she didn’t notice. It’s the same with the Marquis’ House.”

Alfred nodded looking satisfied.

“It’s not good to be too greedy. Since people from other countries were in attendance, it’s not advantageous to show that our Kingdom is in chaos. Still, it has reduced the influence of the Second Prince’s faction… and tipped the balance of the neutral members’ opinions. As expected of you, grandmother.”

“I didn’t do anything at all. If I have to say something, it was Edward who caused his own self-destruction… is probably the best way to explain it. At any rate, has that child always been so thoughtless?”

“Who knows… From the very start, he has always been egotistical. If one is to describe his current state, it will be “If he loses his stopper, he will rampage,” or somewhere along those lines.”

Hearing Alfred’s description… I thought it was accurate and nodded my head. It was a perfectly fitting phrase.

“So what you’re saying is that the stopper, that Baron’s daughter… must be taken away. How was it? Since it’s you, you have probably already investigated her.”

“Yes, of course. …Ludy.”

“Yes.”

Ludy, who always stood on the side, reacted to Alfred’s words and took a step forward.

“When we investigated the girl, we found out that she is the illegitimate child of the head of the House of Noir. His partner was a housemaid who was serving in the Royal Castle.

After that, the maid resigned from her position and entered the Noir House. Then, she gave birth to a daughter, Yuri, she left the Noir Baron House and went into seclusion.

Baron Noir seemed like he looked for her whereabouts, but he was not able to find her for the past dozen years, and it wasn’t until the year before the girl enrolled at the academy that she was found.”

Until she was found, I wonder if she has been living in the streets? Even so, to actually look for her without any result for over a dozen years, exactly how large of an importance

did the Baron place on her existence…?

“Is that so… Are there any other information?”

“I am really sorry. There is no other information right now.”

“I understand. Please continue your investigation on her.”

“Certainly.”

“…That said, it would be advantageous for you to have that stopper removed.”

“…Well, I wonder what it is you’re implying.”

When I asked, Alfred played dumb and smiled. Really, he absolutely doesn’t want to reveal his intentions.

“However, because of this matter, there are those who would definitely side Second Prince faction thinking… “Since he doesn’t have a good head on his shoulders, he should be easy to manipulate.” and thus joined delightedly. As for the people who are on our side, they were probably pleased to see Edward showing such an appearance. Therefore, it’s presumably very convenient for you, right?”

“…Well, I won’t disagree that it will not be a disadvantage to me if he becomes a good bait.”

Although Alfred said while smiling wryly, I, too, agreed with him. The people at the top should protect the common people… As of now, there aren’t many aristocrat Houses with prided themselves in doing that.

Or rather, they do things for the prosperity of their own Houses… To be prideful of their social standings for their own self-satisfaction, and repeatedly use their influences for their personal greed. These kinds of people, they will probably also try to make use of the royal family.

…Since it’s like that, Edward will not be a good ruler. After all, if I have to point out something, he gives the impression that he would do whatever he likes.

After all, there might be another side who would want to make use of that child. …Even more so because Alfred has yet to show himself.

Alfred hasn’t taken the center stage for more than ten years. Even though he attended the academy for noble children, he graduated from the academy without using the royal family’s name. There are probably not a lot of people who remembers him when he was younger.

The First Prince whose name is not even well known, and the Second Prince who can be used… That’s probably what some people are thinking.

However, on the contrary, it is a chance to completely eradicate those people. As long as that child continues to act the same way as he did in yesterday’s party.

“…And so? Have you already made plans on what you intend to do in the future?”

“…”

Although I tried asking, as I expected, he remained silent. The only thing he did was

smiled. Really, although he is my own grandson, I cannot read his emotions.

“Well, it’s fine. Based on whatever it is you plan on doing, I will just go along with it. No matter what it is you have planned, I’m sure that the results will be splendid.”

As long as the daughter of the Baron, Yuri, is present, nothing can be expected of Edward. This is something I understood during the recent party.

When I think of the moment that child ascends the throne and obtains the power… The risks are too big. That being the case when I consider the future of this Kingdom… I can only entrust it to the person in front of me, Alfred. Even if Alfred ends up letting me down, he is still better than that child.

“…Which reminds me, I invited Iris to the recent party. She has grown up and became really beautiful.”

When I said that, he reacted with a sudden but slight twitch. …However, his face immediately returned to his previous smiling expression where one couldn’t read what he’s thinking.

“Grandmother. Why did you especially went out of your way to invite her?”

Although his the tone of his voice was a little sharp, I was happy. Because it means that he is considerably concerned in her affairs.

“Oh my, it’s because I love girls who always does her best. Isn’t it natural for me to want to meet her?”

When I started recalling it, I started to smile. She has similar facial features to Melly, and one can feel the same atmosphere the Duke of Armelia has surrounding her.

Fufufu… If Melly is a large rose, then Iris similar to a beautiful, upright and dignified lily. Her elegance is different, that’s what I thought when I saw her.

“In addition, this is a positive thing for Iris, isn’t it? I heard from Melly that she’s been receiving invitations left and right.”

“…Considering her quick-wittedness, there are no possibilities that people will not approach her.”

“That might be so. Her background in business, achievements, appearance, and lineage… all of them are really attractive. Doesn’t Alfred thinks so as well?”

“I think so, too.”

Alfred answered casually. Ahhh, really. Although I think it’s fine if he let his expression loose a little more. While I was thinking so, when I quietly observed Alfred, I noticed that he looked a little troubled which cause me to deepen my smile.

“What is it? It seems like you want to ask something.”

“No? There’s nothing in particular.”

In this kind of situation, it can’t be helped if I want to make him more unsettled. Well, since I was able to shake Alfred a little, let’s call this a win.

“Come to think of it, Alfred. In your eyes, what do you think of the House of the Duke of

Armelia?”

“What exactly do you mean by that?”

“The government of their fief, and its structure. …I don’t have any ulterior motive.”

“If I were to put it in one word… it’s ‘interesting.’ Various reforms are being made. If there’s something I’m worried about, it’s their growing military potential. In my opinion, one hundred years in the future, it won’t be strange if the Duke of Armelia’s House will become the most prosperous in the entire Kingdom.”

“As I thought, it’s like that after all. It’s not something to be happy about if one House has too much power. …That said, for the development of the Kingdom, it is necessary for each fief to advance as well. Because of that, we must make an allowance on something that shouldn’t exist.”

“Although you say that, since it’s grandmother, it’s not like you will do anything unkind towards their House. The fact that the Royal Guards whose skills are the pride of the royal family are mostly from the Duke of Armelia’s House, and that we continue to leave them alone is an excellent proof of that.”

“Well, that’s right. In addition, there is also that fact that the previous heads and current head of their family have been supporting the entire Kingdom as its Prime Minister… And compared to other nobles, they are the definition of an aristocrat who behave like proper aristocrats and contribute to the Kingdom… Especially with the current situation, they haven’t done anything particularly rebellious.”

Not only is the Duke of Armelia doing a good job being the Kingdom’s Prime Minister, their House also makes contributions towards the royal family. Rather than chipping the power and influence of that House, it makes one more confident that that House is powerful.

In addition, I also heard some of their standpoints. They are gradually giving their support to Alfred to become the next King. Because of various situations, Edward has gotten himself into a difficult position with the Prime Minister. Although I have been retired up until recently, I’m being made to work. Just like once upon a time… because of that guy.

“…Well then, grandmother. Please excuse me, I must get going now.”

When the conversation ended, Alfred bowed towards me and left.

* * *

Common Sense of a Duke’s Daughter - Chapter 37

Activities in the Royal City

Ah, how nostalgic… For a while, I looked at the scenery of the Royal City in comparison to the fief and became absorbed in it. Compared to the day-to-day life in the fief, living in the Royal City felt like a raging wave.

That is because of what happened ten days ago…

“Oh my, it does seem that a lot of invitations has arrived.”

After the party to commemorate the founding of the Kingdom, we decided to spend a day to relax at home and drink tea. Although my body doesn’t feel that tired, my mind did. At that time, while I was drinking tea with mother, one of the butlers serving our house came to deliver invitations sent to our House.

“Earl Monroe and Marquis Rudolf are associates of Ellia’s maternal House… So there’s no way I would go.”

“The invitations are not just for Her Grace, but there are invitations for the young mistress as well.”

“I’m not understanding the meaning more and more. Well… after looking at what happened at that party, I can understand why they would want to make an acquaintance. Iris-chan, do you want to go?”

“No way… I certainly never had a thought of going.”

For me to attend a tea party held in the Houses of one of the Second Prince’s faction? I will absolutely refuse to go. In the first place, there’s no point in trying to deepen the association now.

“I thought so as well.”

Mother blew out a sigh and continued drinking tea.

“Oh, are there any other Houses that you would like to go to?”

“…The House of Marquis Langley.”

“The House of Marquis Langley? Ah, if I’m not mistaken, the daughter of that House was one of Iris-chan’s classmates.”

“Yes. We got acquainted while I was still in the academy.”

Mimosa — I wonder how she’s doing…? Although we’ve been exchanging letters from time to time, it’s been more than two years since we last met.

“If that’s the case, then we’ll go to Marquis Langley’s House. Besides that, is there any other Houses you would like to go to?”

“Hmm, which Houses does mother think will be fine to go to?”

Apart from the Houses part of the Second Prince’s faction, there are numerous other invitations. However, because I didn’t leave the fief for so long, I am not well informed

regarding most of the Houses.

However, since I got the opportunity to make some connections… I would also like to take the time to get acquainted with some of them. Because of that, “which House” to go to becomes really important.

Because I don’t have much time… I need to be efficient. In order to decide on which Houses would be best to make acquaintances with, I consulted with mother.

“I guess Baron Messi’s House would be good. After that, the Earl of Dranbalt’s House.”

“The Earl of Dranbalt’s House, if I’m not mistaken, mother and that House’s Countess has a deep friendship?”

From the corner of my memory, I remembered mother going to the Dranbalt’s House a lot.

“Yes. The Countess has really good sense, and it’s very interesting to talk to her.”

“Since it’s mother who is saying that, it’s quite a compliment.”

“Thank you. …In addition, Dranbalt’s House is part of the neutral faction, so when they hold a tea party, the majority of the people invited are also neutral members. If Iris-chan wants to learn about the strife of the factions, won’t this be a perfect chance?”

As expected of mother… It was as if she read my mind, and because of that, I decided in my heart to attend the Dranbalt’s tea party.

“If Iris-chan will be going, I will go as well.”

“Let’s go together, mother. Then, is there something about Baron Messi’s House?”

“As for Baron Messi, he is one of the people who fought alongside father in the war against the Towair Kingdom. Knighthood was bestowed upon him because of his military exploits… However, the region he governs is adjacent to the Towair Kingdom, so even though it’s the season, he rarely leaves his fief in order to protect the border.”

“Baron Messi… Ah, you mean Mabaras-sama? I heard about him from grandfather once. If I’m not mistaken, he is a close friend of grandfather.”

“That’s right. And he is also known as the excellent right arm of father. You do know that in the past, father played an active role in the military unit during the war?”

“Yes. Of course, I know about it.”

At that time, there was an impasse… No, we were actually a little inferior, and the person who turned the tide and brought victory to the Tasmeria Kingdom was grandfather.

Because what had happened, grandfather was appointed as General, and even until now, he is respected by the Knights and Military personnel.

…And when I wanted to hear about the old times from grandfather, if I remember correctly, he stayed silent while looking embarrassed.

“That’s right. Because the history books omitted the a lot of details, not a lot was said about what happened in the vicinity. Nevertheless, because of what had happened, it led to Mabaras-sama being rewarded with Knighthood…”

“Certainly, since it’s like that, it would be best for me to meet him at least once.”

This is a rare opportunity… Since that’s the case, I should meet him at least once.

“Yes. In addition, Baron Messi is part of the First Prince faction, naturally, most of the people who will attend are part of the First Prince faction.”

“If that’s the case, there is more of a reason for me to go.”

“That’s how it is. …Earl Monroe holds entertainments all the time, but it would be more constructive for him to be more like Baron Messi who is usually protecting the borders.”

“…Yeah…”

After listening to mother’s words, I immediately pulled up a map of Tasmeria Kingdom in my head. That reminds me, the House of Earl Monroe and Baron Messi’s fief are close to each other, which near the borders of our Kingdom and Towair Kingdom’s.

If I’m not mistaken, it was also the main battlefield during the war against the Towair Kingdom. Because that area is where the granary is, the war started by aiming for the crops.

The Towair Kingdom is further up north where the land is mostly damp. In comparison, our Kingdom is rich in crops and that’s the reason why they aimed for our Kingdom.

Most of our country has everlasting spring, we have a lot of fertile lands where crops can easily grow. The land governed by Earl Monroe is north of Tasmeria Kingdom, which has four seasons, but nevertheless, different crops can be produced.

“Does Earl Monroe’s fief covers a large area of land?”

“Yes, something like that. However, every year, even before the season begins, he’s staying in the Royal City. He attends parties here and there, and in return, he also holds considerable entertainments.”

“Is that so, but why…”

Especially since the location around his land is insecure. The war against the Towair Kingdom ended, but there was no signed truce agreement, so there is no ceasefire. That said, I am hopeless to help with the situation since that area is not where the fief I govern is. The only thing I can do is keep it in mind and observe what happens.

“Let’s put that matter aside. This time, since Iris-chan doesn’t have much time, I thought it would be good, but what do you think?”

“Yes… As mother suggested, I will be attending the events of these three Houses.”

“Is that so. Then, let us send an answer immediately… and the closest event is…”

“It’s the event at Marquis Langley’s House. The event is the day after tomorrow. However, instead of calling it an entertainment, it’s more like a private event.”

We quickly gave our answer to the butler who was still waiting.

“Is that so. Then, Iris-chan. Let’s start our preparations tomorrow.”

“Yes, mother.”

Thus, this began my visitation of parties after a long time. …That said, there was only three.

* * *

Translator's Message

Remember when I told you guys that there was a snowstorm here and ruined our electrical line? Well, a tree also landed on our roof and wrecked it.

The repairman was scheduled to come today, so I stayed home to work, however, I didn't think that they would be so loud to the point where I couldn't get any work (translation) done… Thus, this chapter was a little late.

Next chapter will be released in about an hour or two.

PS: Disqus (the comment section) is undergoing maintenance from April 21 to April 23 (Thursday to Saturday), so please don't panic if it doesn't appear.

Common Sense of a Duke’s Daughter - Chapter 38

Reunion

Firstly, it was the visit to Marquis Langley's House.

Because it's a private event, I thought that I wouldn't feel nervous… But after thinking that it's been a long time since I met Mimosa, I started feeling nervous. After I have arrived in Marquis Langley's mansion, one of their servants led me to their drawing room.

"…It's been a long time. Iris-sama."

In the drawing room, Mimosa was already there sitting while waiting.

"Thank you very much for your invitation today."

I returned her greetings and sat down. With that timing, apart from one lady's maid, Mimosa asked all the servants to leave the room.

"…Let's stop the greetings here… Iris, it has really been such a long time. I'm glad to see you looking so spirited…"

I wonder what happened to that solemn atmosphere from earlier, she returned to her natural self. Mimosa Langley. She was my classmate in the academy and my best friend. As for her appearance, with slightly drooping eyes, she looks gentle and cute. Because my facial features look a little strict, there's a complete contrast between us.

"I'm sorry for worrying you, Mimosa…"

"Seriously. While I was resting because of a cold, I didn't think you would be expelled… That's why I kept telling you to be careful of those people."

Mimosa did warn me severely back then. 'Don't get too close to that daughter of a Baron, Yuri, and not be too concerned with her.' However, when I saw her getting close to Edward-sama, I tried to interfere and was faced with uncompromising retaliation as a result.

"I have reflected. At that time, I didn't think that the other side would plan so far ahead and retaliate to that extent."

"You're right. If it was the old them, I don't think they would even think of going to that extent. However, when those people became associated with that child, they changed a lot."

"Yes… Mimosa, you noticed it as well?"

"Isn't it only you who did not notice because you were too crazily absorbed with Edward-sama? With just a glimpse, I saw it all. Hey, Iris… to be honest, I'm scared of that girl."

"…Scared?"

Although I started to smile, but after seeing the serious expression on her face, I withdrew my smile. When I came face to face with her during the party, she looked like an innocent girl with the fascination of a child, so I didn't really think about it.

“I’m scared because I cannot tell what she’s thinking at all. In addition, she seems really innocent under the guise of a child… But it doesn’t feel that way at all.

I mean, if you look at those people… Until those people met that child, they would act according to training they were given depending on their individual statuses, so do you think they would have behaved in such a way?

It is because they understood their own positions that they were more vigilant compared to others of people who might want to utilize them… Nevertheless, they immediately and readily fell into that child’s palm and moved in the way she wanted.

And because they themselves are not aware of the situation, it’s attributed to that child’s clever actions. Even their arrogant behaviors, I found it suspicious and wondered if there’s any meaning behind them.”

“…Are you not thinking about it too much? I mean, her actions and way of speaking might just be her natural self.”

In this situation, I find it difficult to think that it’s that child’s technique. That’s what I thought when I took things into consideration.

…That said, there is also that part of me who is in complete denial. One of the reasons is because I felt uneasy is concerning the words Mimosa used to describe the Baron’s daughter, Yuri, while she was still in the academy. The other reason is because I thought that the things she spoke of was too extreme… and I tried to drive it to the corner of my mind.

“…Is that so… Really, let’s put a stop to this topic.”

Although Mimosa didn’t look convinced, she couldn’t find any words to refute it, and seemed to have grudgingly agreed.

“Apart from that, Iris. How are you doing these days?”

After switching the topic, Mimosa returned to her natural calm self and asked. Mimosa is, how should I describe this… She is very feminine, and the atmosphere around her feel very maternal.

“…Even if you ask me how I’ve been… It’s exactly as I have written in my letters. I guess you could say that… I’ve been busy managing the conglomerate, and up to my neck in the fief’s politics.”

“I want to hear all the details about it. Isn’t it wonderful? You opened a large store here in the Royal City, and isn’t the most popular cafe also part of Azura Conglomerate? Mother and I are a big fan of their beauty products, and I also love their confectioneries, especially the chocolates.”

“Thank you very much for that.”

“In addition, you became really beautiful… Did you do anything special?”

When I saw her looking at me with dreamy eyes and started laughing, I winced a little.

“I-I didn’t really do anything special. I don’t have that much free time. …Mimosa, as well, what have you been doing lately?”

“I also haven’t been doing much? …After graduating from the academy, because I am not engaged to anyone, I have been staying in the Royal City and undergoing bridal preparations until I find a partner… That’s how it was supposed to be, but with the current situation, I don’t want to immediately find a partner… so I’ve been a little bored.”

“Oh…”

Strangely, I completely understand. Especially the latter half. At this time, with the active struggle of the factions, since one won’t know which side their partner might join, it’s better to hold off than to make a bad marriage.

“Well, it’s all good. Since I’m not at all ready for marriage either. It’s a good chance to reflect upon myself.”

If anything, I think Mimosa would have received a lot of offers for marriage… I thought it was a little regretful. But I’m sure it’s not just Mimosa, a lot of Houses part of the neutral faction are finding it hard to find a partner.

Going with the flow, I started drinking tea, but my hand holding the cup suddenly stopped. Together with some scones and sandwiches, there was a familiar chocolate engraved with a lily.

“I’m sorry about this, Iris. Although it’s one of your store’s product… as I’ve said earlier, it’s one of my favorites.”

“There’s no need for you to apologize. I’m really glad you like it that much. That reminds me, I plan to inspect the stores here in the Royal City… Would Mimosa like to come along?”

“Could you be talking about the store of Azura Conglomerate?”

Mimosa’s eyes started to sparkle.

“Because I plan to visit the affiliated stores as well, it might be a little tough. After all, I have some time left here in the Royal City… So I was thinking of taking this opportunity to see the state of the stores. Of course, because it’s an inspection, although there would be a lot of people there, it can’t be helped if we don’t bring a lot of guards for security purposes.”

Because it’s an inspection, we cannot take that many people. However, as a daughter of an aristocrat, Mimosa’s House might not agree with her going out without a certain number of guards.

“How many people would it be okay to take along?”

“Up to two people… I will be taking Ryle and Dida along, as well as Tanya.”

“If Ryle-san and Dida-san will be with us, I don’t think father will oppose to it.”

“Oh my, you seem to trust those two very much.”

“That is only natural. Their superiority has been known throughout the Kingdom… It is only natural to trust and rely on their strength.”

“I wonder if that’s the case. …If you successfully receive permission, please send me a note.”

“Yes, of course. When should I send it by?”

“Sometime this week.”

“I understand.”

After that, until the sun went down, we continued talking about our days in the academy, and the current fashion in the Royal City. As the saying goes, time flies by really quickly when you’re having fun, and if Tanya didn’t tell me that should head home soon… I might have continued to immerse myself with talking to her.

* * *

Translator’s Message

I have a positive opinion of Mimosa and think that she’s quite intelligent. And based on her assessment of Yuri, even I would feel terrified.

Common Sense of a Duke’s Daughter - Chapter 39

Analysis

“…Young mistress. Are you thinking about what Mimosa Langley-sama said earlier?”

While we were riding the carriage to return home, Tanya brought up the topic. Although I was absentmindedly looking outside, I immediately focused my glance at Tanya.

“…When you said a while ago, when exactly do you mean?”

“It’s when she was talking about the daughter of the Baron, Yuri. Excuse me for being forward, but the young mistress’ expression looked like you were momentarily lost in thought.”

“…I am surprised. To think that Tanya was watching carefully.”

“It is the maid’s duty to understand what our master is thinking.”

Although Tanya clarified the reason why… I still think she’s amazing. Even though I intended not to show it on my face as much as possible.

“…Young mistress, with your appearance, it seems like you didn’t think that Mimosa-sama was overthinking things…”

“That’s right. However, it’s nothing really exorbitant?”

I have no grounds to suspect her. Or rather, because it was too extreme, I withdrew myself and tried not to think of those words.

…However, talking about it now might be a good idea. Since it’s Tanya, I am certain I can trust that she will not say anything to anyone. Above all, more than anything, she would probably feel really honored for me to talk to her about it.

“If you’d like, could you please let me know some of the things you were thinking of…?”

“Even though Mimosa has warned me about it… I really thought it was because I dug my own grave.”

“What do you mean to say?”

“First of all, about that soup kitchen. Although it was criticized by the aristocrats and other bureaucrats… But when one thinks about it from the perspective of the common people, wouldn’t they welcome it? And they would think, ‘They are actually thinking about us.’”

From what I heard from father, they cannot continue to distribute food for long. This country doesn’t have the capabilities to do it. Because of the remaining debt from the previous war, I thought that the Finance should be tightening things up even more.

Thus, instead of using more and more money to distribute food to the people, I believe the money should be used for something else.

In addition, the people don’t know the current financial situation of the country. They have no way of finding out. In other words, because they have no idea how much pressure the country’s finances is under, when taxes are temporarily raised, their impression of the

country will worsen. However, it doesn't mean that the impressions they have of the Second Prince will change.

"When thinking of it this way, they will be able to make allies with the common people. …About Miss Yuri's behavior. She behaved that way even though she's an aristocrat."

"About the distribution of food?"

"No. Her speech and behavior during that party."

"I have heard about her behavior during the party, I believe it was something the Second Prince's faction would have pulled…?"

"Yeah, that's right. I think most aristocrats would think so. However, isn't it too convenient for it to be interpreted that way?"

"Convenient, you say…?"

"Right. For example, if I not only want to maintain the rights I have acquired but further gain more rights and power… Instead of the First Prince whose existence remains a mystery, the Second Prince is better.

After all, what kind of person is the First Prince, and what kind of thoughts he has… because he has not come forward for over ten years, it is almost impossible to comprehend. As for Ed-sama, I think he is suitable and an easy target for Miss Yuri to elevate her own status, that's my impression."

"Is it because 'he is easy to manipulate?'"

"If one is to put it simply, yes. The arrogant behavior he displays when it comes to Miss Yuri, it might be what impresses Yuri even further."

"…I see…"

"That said, I have no grounds for suspicion… As I thought, I might be overthinking it."

Un, I feel like I have become a person who over thinks too much. If one obtained people one can use, then one should use them. If one wants to make sure Ed-sama rises to the throne, it would have been more than enough to make a frontal attack.

For starters, there was no need to drag Ed-sama's head and show him a flower garden… To show the royal family, to gather the hyena-like aristocrats, to drag other people in, and to choose situations where one would deepen the antagonism between the people of this country.

"However, young mistress. Just to be safe, it's better for you to take some precautions."

"That's right. …For starters, I will be extra cautious in communicating with the royal family and other dealings in the Royal City. After all, the current King has fallen ill… With the current situation, I can't help but be anxious."

As for Azura Conglomerate, in order to not centralized its operation in the Royal City, it has directly opened a branch in each fief and has been recently increasing the number of exchanges made with foreign countries. When I consider the affected earnings, I found that this progress can't be helped, and it's better to withdraw from the Royal City before the confusion increases.

In addition, the conglomerates in the fief are sure to take similar actions. To begin with, when I spoke to Moneda for the first time, the trade in the Royal City has already decreased.

Afterward, the peace and order of the fief should be maintain. Even if the confusion in the Royal City doesn't intensify, it doesn't mean that we won't receive sparks of it… Nevertheless, we have already established a security force beforehand. I guess I should have a discussion about this with Ryle and Dida.

"As for me, I will try to gather as much information as I can."

"I see… I'm counting on you."

When I returned home, I went to my room to relax. Since I am free the day after tomorrow, other than our conglomerate, I wonder if I should look around the Royal City.

Since it's been a long time, it might be good to look at the academy from the outside. For some reason, after meeting Mimosa again, I kind of missed it. While thinking about those things, I feel asleep just like that.

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Common Sense of a Duke’s Daughter - Chapter 40

Tea Time with the Madams

Now then, today is the day to visit Earl Dranbalt. This time, it's different compared to when I went to visit Marquis Langley's house, and various other people have been invited. …And because of that, I am really nervous.

"Iris-chan, you'll be fine so you don't have to worry so much~"

However, since I'm together with mother, I find it reassuring. I am really reassured. The next House I am to visit next is Baron Messi's House, so I want to take this opportunity to regain my senses.

When we arrived and Earl Dranbalt's House, a servant came to greet us at the door. And then, a man dressed in a tailcoat guided us. The place we arrive at was a beautiful courtyard filled with greeneries.

"Welcome, and thank you for coming. Lady Mellice, Iris-sama."

A woman who was sitting at the center table stood up and came to greet us with a smile. She has soft golden hair that seems to shine even more brightly under the sun. Although her figure was a little round, she seems gentle and cheerful… She was Earl Dranbalt's wife, Countess Dranbalt.

"Thank you for sending an invitation for today's event. Together with my daughter, we were looking forward to it."

Mother responded with a formal tone. No matter how close mother is with Countess Dranbalt, she wouldn't act out of order because there were others around.

"Oh, my, for Lady Mellice to say something like that, I'm very honored. Please, come in and have a seat."

When Countess Dranbalt said that, she pointed us to vacant place. A man wearing a tailcoat was immediately standing by near us.

"Then, I shall accept your offer."

And then, we respectively headed to our vacant seats.

The garden was well-kept and overflowing with greenery. And the tables were arranged opposite of it, giving it the best view of the surroundings. What is stood out, even more, were the dresses people wore. Light pink, light yellow, light blue… Everyone was wearing pastel colors. Perhaps they each person was to represent a flower and were seated in that order as well. I see, the reason why the dress code — wear pastel colors — was specified on the invitation was to aim for this outcome.

"I shall make the introduction. This is Lady Remedy, Earl Caldina's wife."

"Please treat me well."

When the lady standing on the left side of Countess Dranbalt saw me, she nodded at me lightly. When I saw her, I also slightly lowered my head.

“This here is Lady Dora Danas, Earl Danas’ wife.”

“I have been looking forward to meeting Lady Mellice and Iris-sama.”

The lady beside Lady Remedy said so and also bowed lightly. And I, too, like a bobblehead doll, bowed my head lightly again.

“And then, this lady over here is Salina Mines, Baron Mines’ wife.”

“I am honored to meet you.”

…With that, all the introductions were done. To be honest, it was getting hard for me to put faces to their names… so I was thankful that it ended.

And then, the tea party began. I ate some of the sweets placed on the table and drank the tea that was served. Unn, it’s delicious… Since it will be embarrassing if I cannot follow the conversation, I perked up my ears.

“The clothes Iris-sama wore the other day was very beautiful. From where did you purchase that dress from?”

Lady Dora suddenly asked that question.

“I used the cloth obtained from the East to make that dress. However, we have not gathered enough materials, but when we do, it will be sold in earnest.”

“Oh, so that’s how it is. Although the fabric was wonderful, the design of the dress was also unique and lovely. Where did the design of that dress come from…?”

“I asked a tailor shop from the Duke of Amerlia’s fief to make it.”

“Then, that dress was designed by Iris-sama?”

“No, to say that I designed the dress is a little… I thought something like that would be nice, and roughly explained what I wanted.”

I can’t say that it was because I wanted something easy to move in… At any rate, because I’ve been wearing clothes and dresses that’s easy to wear and suitable for work, it would be difficult for me to suddenly start wearing tight corsets and extravagant and heavy fluttering skirts.

Thanks to my almost impossible request I made to the tailor shop’s designer-san, a non-heavy dress was completed to my satisfaction… That’s the only way to put it.

“So that’s how it was. However, I think that that dress will be popular in the future. Don’t you think so as well, Lady Remedy?”

“Yes. After all, it had garnered a lot of attention during the party. Even now, I believe many have gone to the tailor shop to order one.”

…I wonder if that’s really what’s happening? I mean, if it is like that, isn’t this the chance to advertise the clothes from the Duke of Armelia’s fief?

While I was thinking about it, before I knew it, the topic of the conversation changed. The current fashion, and the current state of each House.

The center of the conversation is the organizer, Countess Dranbalt, and mother. Countess

Dranbalt indirectly brought the topic into the conversation and started to calm everyone down. Mother also didn't try to obstruct the organizer in any way, and the place was brightening up visible to the eye.

"…Now that I think about it, about Earl Monroe's House. A rumor came about that he has been using his influence a lot lately, has anyone else heard of it?"

Lady Remedy brought up that topic.

"No, but I do know that Earl Monroe has been holding a lot of extravagant entertainments lately. I once saw his wife wearing a brand new large diamond necklace, and two days after later at one of the events, I saw her wearing a brand new large emerald earring. When the jeweler came to our house, he implied that Earl Monroe has been ordering many pieces of jewelry and dress lately, you do know about it? Also, it seems like he has been going to Azura Conglomerate non-stop."

"I am only in charged of the management of Azura Conglomerate, and for the management of our patrons, someone else is in charge of it… But after hearing your story, it sure is amazing."

Because the glances were directed towards me, for the time being, I gave them an answer. Other than the basic overall management, I have not looked into other things.

As for the patron management and other things, I have left it all to Sei and other people. Thus, until now, I do not know how much each House has spent. However, even if I knew it, I wouldn't tell anyone else.

More precisely, if Lady Remedy's story is true, then I wonder why Earl Monroe is so prosperous? Was he like that from the very start? No, if I'm not mistaken, the granary is in his land. Although I haven't heard of him suddenly starting a business or anything…

"Isn't that right? I also received the news during the party."

"What an enviable situation. Speaking of jewels, Lady Dora. Where did you purchase the jewels you wore during the party the other day? It was very beautiful and I was charmed just by looking at it."

Right then, mother changed the topic of the conversation. Although I wanted to hear a little bit more about the previous topic, I guess I'll pull back here. Or rather, as expected of mother, she was able to observe everyone who attended the party.

"About that, it's a jewel called Topaz. Because I was enchanted by the beautiful red tinge of the jewel, I pleaded my husband for one."

"When a woman pleads, it's a good way for the men to show their resourcefulness. And so, was Earl Danas pleased with it?"

Hearing Lady Remedy's words, I wondered if that was indeed the case, but for the time being, I shut my mouth and listened. I didn't have a husband before I was reborn, and although I was engaged before… when I asked him to go shopping with me, Edward-sama found it really troublesome.

"Not at all, my husband is completely ignorant of jewels…"

"Even though he is ignorant of jewels, when he saw Lady Dora wearing it, I'm sure he

would have surely fallen in love all over again. Don't you think so as well, Lady Mellice?"

"Lady Dora is youthful and a lovely looking lady. Isn't it because of that that Earl Danas was on tenterhooks during the party?"

When they heard mother's words, everyone said 'kyaa' with a high-pitched voice. From that point on, the topics of the conversation kept switching in random order, such as who looked really cool.

As for those ladies with daughters, they started dreaming what kind of husband they would want for them. However, there was someone in the vicinity who couldn't bring her heart to join in on the conversation.

…Mother as well, I wonder if she wanted to think about whom she would want me to marry? But because of what happened with Ed-sama, it is natural for families not to want me to marry into theirs.

I wonder if she was holding back because of me since she didn't say anything about who she would want her daughter to have as a husband. …Nevertheless, I am very thankful for it.

"…Iris-sama, what do you think about it?"

Hearing Lady Remedy's question, I pulled myself together. It won't do to think about too much during a tea party.

"I am very sorry, I was a little absent-minded just then… What were to referring to?"

"About your future husband. What kind of person would you think would be best for you?"

"As everyone already knows, my engagement has been annulled. Thus, I want to live a quiet life in the fief for the rest of my days."

As for my future dream, I want to be surrounded by children from the orphanage or something similar. …I thought that it was a good plan for the future.

"Oh my… Iris-sama, surely you jest. You are not only the daughter of the Duke of Armelia, you have also done a brilliant job in managing the fief as the fief Lord's proxy and is the President of a famous Conglomerate. In addition, didn't the Queen Dowager also specially set her eyes on you?"

"…Is that so?"

"Yes. If our House was a Ducal House, by all means, it would be our privilege to have you."

Looking regretful, Lady Remedy let out a sigh. As though agreeing to her statement, Lady Salina also nodded.

I didn't think that they were assessing me in such manner, so I was little surprised. … Nevertheless, even if they ask me for the kind of person I'd like to marry, I don't really have anyone in mind.

…Even though there was a small feeling of depression, the conversation continued. Although I was feeling nervous, when it ended, I felt the event was quite pleasant. And for

everyone to be able to enjoy themselves to this extent, this is attributed to Countess Dranbalt's abilities.

I do not have the experience of being a host, and I don't know if I'll ever have a chance to be one in the future… However, if I get an opportunity to hold an event such as this one, I would want it to have the same friendly atmosphere as Countess Dranbalt's… Or rather, as I thought, I would want to have the same sophisticated event that mother usually has, and because of that, I thought to do some training.

* * *

Translator's Message

Prepare for trouble!
Make it double!

To protect the world from boredom!
To unite all people within Japtem nation!
To denounce the evils of lateness and furor!
To extend our reach to the universe above!

Cat!
[Insert name here!]

Team meow meows typing at the speed of light, surrender now and prepare your rite!
Nya, nya, nya
You heard that right!

See what boredom does to people? I wanted to lighten the mood because marriage was brought up once more, and Iris feels like it's something she can't have…

Common Sense of a Duke’s Daughter - Chapter 41

Strolling around the Royal City

Now then, today is the day I take a stroll around the Royal City. I received a message from Mimosa saying she will be able to come, so I've been looking forward to it.

"…Young mistress, it's about time you make preparations."

While I was practicing yoga at my usual spot, I heard Tanya's voice coming from behind. Oh, my, it's already that time. And so, I hurriedly took a shower and started preparing. Because I will be going to town today, I changed to my usual "Alice" clothing.

"Mimosa-sama has already arrived."

"Then, please have her wait in the next room. I will be there soon."

When I finished preparing, I headed to the room next to mine. Although the next room is also part of my room, if the place I was dressing up in a little while ago is a private space, then the room next to that one has a drawing room kind of feeling.

"Good morning, Mimosa. I'm sorry to have asked you to come so early in the morning."

"Good morning, Iris. Oh my… what you're wearing suits you really well."

"Mimosa as well."

Because Mimosa will also be going to town incognito today, what she's wearing makes her more docile than usual. I guess one could describe her current appearance as a daughter of a merchant.

"And also, when I'm wearing this kind of outfit, I'm Alice."

"What is that?"

Mimosa looked like she was rather fascinated.

"An alias, it's an alias. It's not like I can announce my name to the public… So the first thing one would need to do is change one's appearance, right? When you give yourself an alias, it gives an extremely different feeling."

How should I say this, it's gives a feeling of being an actress. When someone calls me with that name… I would make me get more into the role or something like that.

"I see… Since that's the case, then my name will be Misha."

"I understand. Well then, Misha. Shall we be off now… Or rather, I'll make some introductions first. This is Tanya, I guess you already know her, and these two, Ryle and Dida, will serve as our guards today."

The two people who were waiting behind, when I introduced them, they slightly bowed their heads. Although it was normal for Ryle to do so, but Dida is usually easy-going, so I felt quite uneasy.

"Nice to meet me… However, I've heard your names before, so it doesn't feel like this is my first time meeting you. Please take care of me today. On the other hand, these two are

my guards, Harry, and Dan.”

Harry and Dan who were standing beside Mimosa bowed respectively.

“Harry, Dan. Please treat me well.”

I also greeted the two. Harry and Dan has an “I am a guard!” atmosphere around them and felt somewhat stern. For now, since they are wearing plain clothes, I guess it isn’t so bad.

“Well then, since we don’t have much time, let us be off.”

First things first, we headed to the cafe in the Royal City. In here, one can eat chocolate cakes and various other desserts. I wonder how the sales of herbal tea are doing.

When I took a peep, it looks like it’s flourishing. The people who were queuing up for it formed a long time. Because we kept the price as low as possible, not only do the aristocrats buy them but also regular people in town.

“Now then, let’s go line up.”

“…Excuse me for being rude, Alice-sama. Wouldn’t be acceptable for you to use your name here?”

Tanya quietly made a proposal. Everyone is probably thinking the same thing, and question marks lit up above their heads.

“About that, don’t you think there will be no point if they knew I was here? What kind of service they provide, the quality of the products they bring out, and how they treat the people who visit the store; one will not experience these things if one doesn’t come as a guest. I’ve also included how long we need to line up in today’s schedule.”

“I was being too forward, please excuse me.”

“Misha. Because it’ll be like that, are you fine with walking and waiting a lot today?”

“Yes. When one walks a lot, it’s just nice that your stomach will feel more empty.”

“If that’s the case, then I’m glad.”

After that, we waited for a long time before we were able to enter the store. …I wonder if I should expand this shop. Let’s think about that after looking at the appearance of the shop.

The shop is divided into two section, one of the space is for take-out. And the other space has been converted to a coffee shop.

Hmmm… I wonder if it’s about time to construct an individual shop for take-outs. Because it takes up a lot of space, and their sales are about the same as the confectionery shop.

That said, ‘let’s buy some to take home after we finish eating’ …there are also people who have those ideas. Should we keep the store divided but move them to a bigger shop? Or should we establish a branch shop? Hmmm, I’m uncertain.

“Hello, welcome to our shop. For how many people?”

“Seven people.”

“I’m really sorry. If it is acceptable for your group to be divided into two, I will be able to guide you to your seats at once…”

“It’s fine with us.”

And because of that, we were seated separately. Because the other seat is relatively near, we decided to split it this way: Mimosa, Ryle, Tanya, and I in one table, and Harry, Dida, and Dan in another table.

In the beginning, I wanted Tanya to sit in the other table to keep the balance, but she expressed her disapproval. She said, to actually sit in a different table from mine…

And so, I asked if it would be fine for Mimosa and Harry to switch places. So what if they were her guards? Mimosa said that as long and either Ryle or Dida was here, she would be reassured. …For some reason, it seems she really trusted our two guards.

I ordered a cake set while Mimosa ordered the assorted fruits set with chocolate sauce. After we finished ordering, while waiting for our order to arrive, Mimosa and I started a light chatter.

The system of this cafe: the waiter will come to take the order and write it on a piece of paper, and then pass the order to the kitchen. The table number will be written on that piece of paper and is then passed to the counter that does the accounting.

The number on that paper is the same and the number of the wooden tally on the table. And as for the wooden tally on the table, its back is painted white.

When all the orders have been delivered, they will use the white part, but if another order is made, they will turn it again. Of course, when one makes another order, it will be added to the paper that has been passed onto the accounting counter before the order is delivered. …That’s the kind of system the cafe uses.

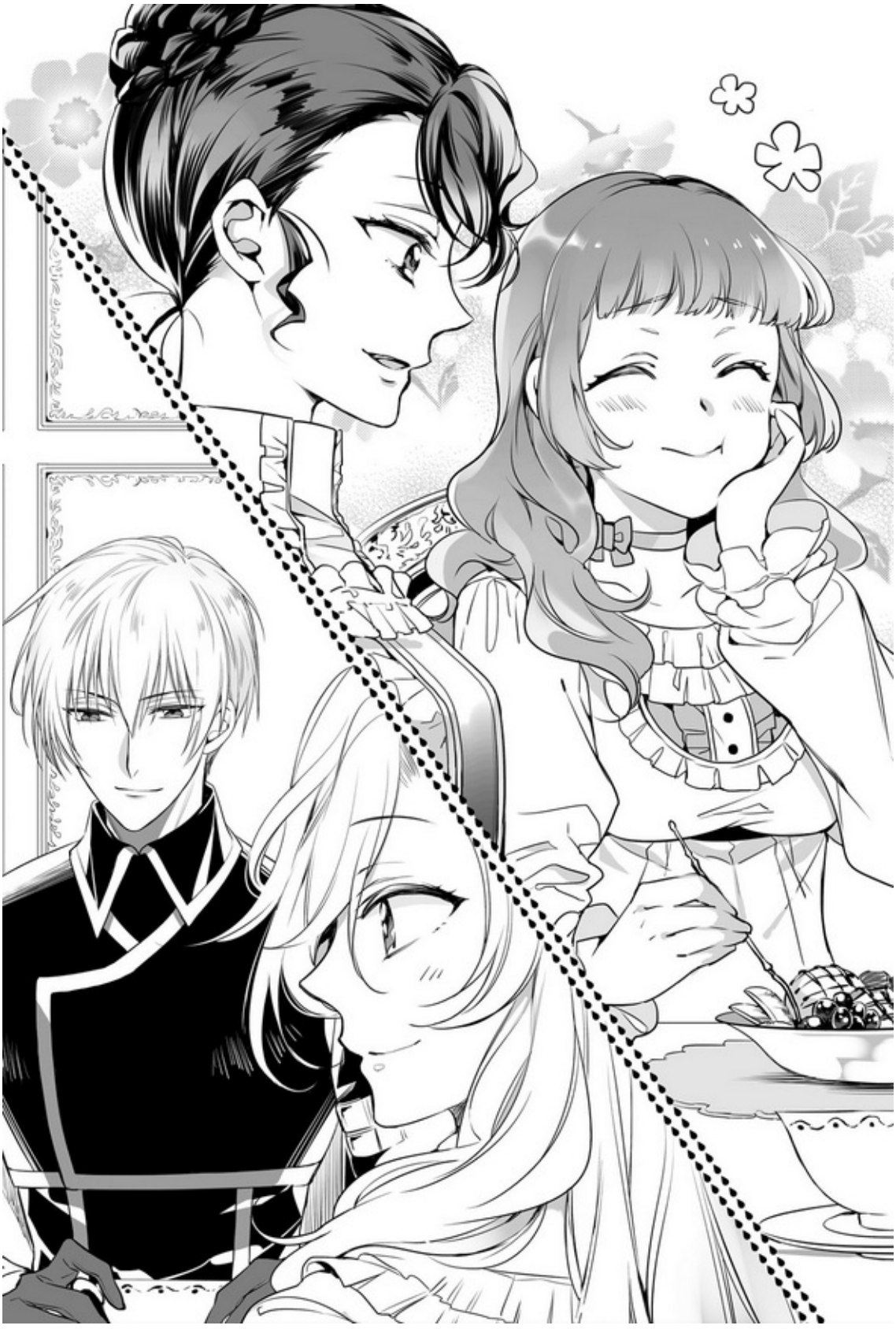
Because it might get difficult to calculate the amount when the time comes, an abacus was introduced. When I was still living in Japan… I’m really glad I learned how to use an abacus when I was in primary school.

The employees were puzzled by it at first, but they have gotten used to it by now. It was well received and their mental calculation has quickened. Not just in the coffee shop, but I wonder if it should be introduced in the primary school division of the fief… I shall put this under consideration.

While I was thinking those kinds of things and chatting, before I knew it, our order had arrived.

“Waa… it looks delicious…!”

Mimosa looked delighted just by looking at it and immediately started eating. As for me, because Merida will always let me try her prototype or when she comes up with new products without fail, it doesn’t feel new to me. That said, eating it here in the shop and eating it in the house gives a whole different feeling.



“…Hmm~!! It tastes good!”

Mimosa said so while looking very satisfied. Somehow, I feel happy as though I was the one eating it.

“I’m happy if that’s the case.”

Although they were busy and there were many customers waiting, their service wasn’t sloppy. I am genuinely happy that all the employees are working hard.

“By the way, why did you decide to start with the coffee shop?”

Mimosa suddenly asked. Before I knew it, the plate in front of her had been wiped clean.

“I didn’t have any particular reason why I chose to come here first. It’s just that they have really good raw ingredients here… that’s all.”

“Nevertheless, it has become this popular, I’m surprised.”

“As for me, I feel blessed just by being here.”

It might be natural for Tanya and the others to feel that way after growing up in that kind of environment. …It really does feel like a blessing.

“…Now then, it’s about time we get going.”

After we finished eating and talking, we took settled our accounts and left the store.

“Next, we’ll be heading to look at the beauty products. Let’s head there slowly while exploring the Royal City.”

Because there’s quite a distance between the coffee shop and the shop that sells the beauty products, we have to walk for a while. On the way, I didn’t forget to roughly look at the shops at the Royal City and prices of their items.

“…Oh?”

Suddenly, my feet stopped walking.

“What’s wrong, Alice?”

“Just now, I thought I saw Miss Yuri or something…”

Because the person disappeared into the crowd, I didn’t get a good look. In addition, because she always stood out well with her entourage, it wasn’t that hard to recognize… but earlier, it looked like she did have two or even one of her followers were with her.

“Are you sure you’re not mistaken? There’s no way she would come here alone.”

“…You might be right.”

I wonder if it’s because of what Mimosa said about her the other day, as well as my conversation with Tanya. It seems like I cannot get her existence out of my head.

I pulled myself together and headed to the next shop.

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Common Sense of a Duke’s Daughter - Chapter 42

Strolling around the Royal City II

Similar to the coffee shop, we also lined up at the beauty shop, and I started to survey the place. Mimosa kept saying she wanted this and that, but because we will be going to the building reserved for members… I got her to act more prudent.

The members-only building is mostly visited by aristocrats, so Mimosa and I have no choice but to reveal our identities. Although the session will be held in a private area, the possibility of running into aristocrats there are still high.

To enter the place, one person must be a member and the person can bring in two attendants. Thus, Tanya, Ryle, and I are one group, while Mimosa, Harry, and Dan are in one group.

…If a limit was not set, everyone would be bringing many of their maids and escorts, and the shop will be in chaos. Thus, we had to take such measures.

Because of that, the store established a waiting area in the corner of the building for guards to wait in. …Dida was waiting there, and while he's there, he will be watching the entrance of the building and observe the security.

And so, we entered the store. This shop looks like an aristocrat's villa here in the Royal City. Because we bought a large vacant mansion with a large garden, the walkway to the entrance of the building is quite long.

First things first, we present our membership card at the gate. After admiring the garden and the lush landscape while walking towards the mansion, we went inside the store.

After entering we will be greeted by a butler and presented our membership card. And then, we will be guided to a private room… that's how it works.

"…Iris-sama. Welcome, and please enjoy your visit."

When the butler saw me, he wasn't confused at all. By the way, his name is Barrett. He used to work as a butler at a certain merchant's house.

"Oh, my, you're not surprised at all."

"I knew that you have arrived here in the Royal City. And I was wondering… when you will take the time to come visit."

"Since that's the case, it seems like I cannot inspect this place in secret."

When I said that in a form of a joke, Barrett smiled from ear to ear. Although he is already an old man, his smile has strange powers.

"With all due respect, Iris-sama. Many aristocrats come to visit this place every single day. Because even the most trifling thing might end up as a big problem… we cannot relax at all."

"Is that so. If so, I'm looking forward to seeing what's inside. But before that, I would like to talk to you, so please go ahead and guide Mimosa first."

“I understand. Then, Mimosa-sama please come with me.”

“Please take care of me.”

“Barrett. I will be waiting over there, when you’re done guiding her, please come pick me up.”

“I understand.”

After I sent Barrett and Mimosa off, I left the entrance and entered a certain room. This room is near the vicinity of the entrance and has no particular use. Because the mansion is quite large, there are a number of unused rooms.

The second floor is basically where all the private rooms to receive guests are. One person per room, servants will guide the people there while the employees will describe the products or provide a demonstration for new products.

On the first floor lies the storage area for the products and a place for the employees to take a break. Although the room I am currently in is vacant, it is because it has not been decided what the rooms on the first floor will be used for. I believe that in the near future, it will also be put into practical use.

“Welcome, how may I help you.”

Oh, my, it looks like someone has arrived. From the room, I heard a voice coming from the entrance.

“I came here today with a companion. Please take care of us.”

When I quietly opened the door to take a peak, Barrett had already returned to greet them While I was gazing at the other party wondering who had arrived…

Oh, if isn’t Earl Monroe. Although he is a little far away, that guy with a stout physical build, a head full of blonde hair and curly forelock bangs covering his forehead… there’s probably no doubt about it? I wonder… if he is the guy from the rumors.

Then, I shifted my attention to his companion. I thought that it was either his wife or his son… but it was someone I was completely unfamiliar with. If it was a woman, I thought it might be a mistress of his, but I can’t tell from the person’s features at all.

However, because the servant or escort following them was completely different… Who is it? While I was thinking about those things, the two already went up.

“I’m sorry to keep you waiting, Iris-sama.”

While I was being absentminded, Barrett knocked on the door and entered the room.

“It’s quite alright. That aside, Barrett. Does Earl Monroe often come here?”

“Yes, it is as you say. In one week, he will come once or twice without fail.”

“Is that so.”

That’s relatively often. …However, I’m happy for the shop.

“What kind of products does he usually buy?”

“As for the Earl, he buys a lot of confectioneries. Also, just recently, he purchased an Eau

de Cologne. In addition, when he was accompanied by his wife or son, they also made many purchases.”

If one is to consider what’s normal… is this normal? That said, although the prices are set quite high, it still depends on how much one buys.

“Heehhh… What kind of products do his wife and son purchase?”

“As for the Madam, as expected, it beauty products. She also asked to receive consultations often. As for the son, as one would expect, he’s similar to the Earl who likes chocolate. Every time they come, they will purchase a splendid amount of things. We would often need to help load them into their carriages, and it would take a while before we finish.”

A splendid amount… he said. While I was wondering how they were able to consume them all… I remembered that Earl Monroe often holds entertainments, so they probably use them then.

“Iris-sama…?”

Barrett called out to me who fell silent while lost in thought.

“Oh, my, I’m sorry. What I would like to talk to you about is nothing extreme. I was just wondering if there’s something bothering you or if there’s something you would like to improve… If there’s anything at all, I want you to let me know directly. Of course, I will have to confirm everything you report to me.”

Because he has already found me out, I wanted to listen to the opinion of someone who is working on-site. In addition, this is a place where aristocrats visit in a regularly, I was more or less wondering if there was anything bothering them.

“I see, so that’s what you’d like to know. Presently, there’s no particular problem. If I am forced to say something, I would like it very much if you could increase the number of employees a little more…”

“Employees, huh. In which area exactly?”

“For the time being, the cooks. There have been many requests to be able to order and eat here.”

“Is that so… However, about cooks, they are compelled to undertake a period of training, so even if we are to hire new ones immediately, you will still have to wait a while… I will look into it right away.”

When I get home, I will make sure to look at the recent sales of this place.

“Thank you. Well then, please guide me to the room as well. From here onwards, please let me see this place as a guest.”

“I understand. Now then, please let me guide you.”

After that, I completed my inspection as a guest. There wasn’t any particular problem, so I ended it after suggesting this and that.

…Mimosa hasn’t come out even after a while… that’s what I was thinking while waiting for her. When she finally came out, she had a contented expression on her face, so she

might have done quite a bit of shopping. …Although I didn’t hear the details from her.

With that kind of feeling, today’s inspection ended. I feel a little forlorn thinking that my short visit to the Royal City is coming to an end, but I also wanted to hurry up and return to the fief…

“Thank you very much for today, Alice.”

“I would also like to thank you for today, Misha.”

…While feeling somewhat complicated, I returned to the house.

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Common Sense of a Duke’s Daughter - Chapter 43

Evening Party

In just a couple more days, my stay in the Royal City will end. Today is the day I am scheduled to visit Baron Messi's house. According to the information provided by mother, Baron Messi typically returns to his fief early when it's about to be off-seasons. Hence, the party. In other words, it is to say farewell to his associates.

The members of the First Prince's faction, who have their own fief, are devoted to land management and often stay in their fief. In other words, they don't have many opportunities to gather. On the contrary, during a season, their attendance rate is quite high.

Because it's that kind of party, is it really acceptable for me to attend…? I started having those kinds of thoughts.

In the morning, I started doing yoga for mental concentration. Beside me was mother who has completely gotten into practicing yoga and was wearing an outfit similar to mine.

"Well, Iris-chan. Your expression is looking stiff. If you keep that up, you'll get tired."

"Is that so…?"

"Yes. Since you're going through all the trouble to loosen your body, you should work on your expression as well… That's right, that's how it should be."

After I finished practicing yoga, I took a shower and changed my clothes. Since today's party will take place at night, I'm still wearing my everyday clothing.

Because there's still some time, I decided to take a look at the reports sent by Sei and Sebastian so that I can immediately send necessary instructions as a reply if needed be.

Hmmm… As I thought, location is important. Since it takes time for the letter to arrive, when I have completely grasped the situation, it might have already changed. When I consider these things, I shouldn't continue to involve myself in any unnecessary things and quickly return to the fief.

While I was scuffling with the documents, I heard a knock coming from the door and Tanya entered the room.

"Young mistress. It is about time for you to make your preparations."

Oh, it's that time already? As I thought, when one is concentrated on doing something, time flies by quickly.

Because I cannot be late, I began my preparations at once. Because the party is being held at night, unlike the dresses I wore to Dranbalt and the Marquis' mansion, I wore a dress similar to what one would wear at an official function. However, as I expected, I am not used to wearing heavy dresses, and I wore something that feels refreshing.

After Tanya finished arranging my hair, I put on some accessories. Today's dress is dark blue in color that matches the color of my eyes. As for accessories, because my hair is

silver, white will not compliment it, so blue sapphire was used instead. Hence, my dress is considerably embroidered with silver thread, making it stand out splendidly.

I finished my preparation in good time. Although the people in the world say that women take too long to prepare, but it takes even more time to put on a dress. In the first place, if someone doesn't help, one won't be able to put it on by themselves.

In the present condition, I rode the carriage and headed to the Baron's residence. Fuuu, I'm feeling really nervous… In the Royal City… since the mansions of aristocrats are all in one sector, there is not much distance between our mansion and Baron Messi's. However, because I'm feeling nervous, I feel like the distance was even shorter.

* * *

While I was frozen stiff with tension, we arrived at Baron Messi's mansion and greet our host, Baron Messi.

"Thank you very much for your invitation to today's event."

"I, as well, would like to thank you for your attendance."

Baron Messi, as expected of someone who was once part of the military, his physical build is proportional. …In addition, every single one of his body movements isn't coarse, but quite beautiful. He gives an impression of an attractive older man with silver-gray hair.

"Grandfather also felt regretful. To not be able to attend this gathering."

Even though grandfather wanted to attend, he couldn't make it. He said something about having official business elsewhere. Although he didn't talk about his business in full detail, he felt that it was quite regrettable. …Well, compared to myself, grandfather has closer relations with Baron Messi.

"Please let me humbly say that I also felt extremely disappointed when I heard it. Please tell him that if another chance arises, please come by all means."

"Yes. Without fail."

After I finished greeting the host, I entered the hall and looked around. Wow, this is amazing. …That was the first impression I had. There were many well-known figures here and there.

When it comes to aristocrats, there were many who received their title after some distinguished service. They started out as commoners, but after a meritable service, they were bestowed a title and became an aristocrat.

I have heard various names of the people who works as a bureaucrat from father. To actually see many of those famous people gathered in this place, it can't be helped if I'm astonished.

"…Lady Iris, it has been a long time since we last met."

"Oh… Earl Sagittaria, it has been a long time."

Earl Sagittaria serves this Kingdom as its Finance Minister. In plain words, he is one of father's subordinates, and I've met his acquaintance before.

If I’m not mistaken, when the Queen Dowager was still the Queen, thanks to his abilities, the Earl received a recommendation and was appointed to his position.

Although he has the appearance of a good-natured old man right now, but to be able to handle the hard to deal with people in the Royal Castle… I don’t believe he is what he appears to be.

“I did not at all expect Earl Sagittaria to make an appearance.”

As someone who has an important position in the administration of the Kingdom, I didn’t think that he would choose one of the Prince’s side… This is my real feelings.

“Having a mere official such as myself will not make a difference in the fight for the throne.”

Well, not directly, but it’s not like he can say that. I’m sure that he has considerable influence… since he holds the purse strings of the Kingdom. And that is influence itself in its own way.

“However, whatever the Kingdom decides what’s best for the Kingdom… it should also benefit the people. And I believe that it is the duty of the people part of the government to think about those things.”

“Indeed. For you to think that way, it will definitely benefit the country.”

When Earl Sagittaria heard my words, he said nothing and deepened his smile.

“Come to think of it, Lady Iris. The clothes you are wearing tonight looks quite splendid.”

“Thank you very much.”

“Are they also obtain from the trade with the East…?”

“Not at all. I ordered these clothes at a clothing shop in our fief.”

“Is that so. The fief of Armelia is filled with many people of exceptional talents. It is also facing the sea, I’m quite envious. Refinement of salt, obtaining foreign currency from trade with other countries… because it’s facing the sea, there are plenty of ways to enrich the fief. It also seems like the trade is doing favorably well considering the quantity.”

“Y-yes… Well. It’s all thanks to the people.”

As expected of Sagittaria-sama. He has completely grasped the movement of each and every individual fief.

“How humble. I heard that it’s no small thanks to the instructions you’ve made, isn’t that right?”

For the time being, I responded to that question with just a smile. How should I put this, I found myself lost for words. Although my mind doesn’t feel painful, but it’s quite troublesome to be probed.

“Also, I heard that you are considerably involved in the fief’s politics. Reforming the taxation system, protecting orphans, as well as establishing a powerful security force. … Exactly what in the world are you aiming for.”

To sum up his statement, earning foreign currency through trade, doing business in other

fiefs to earn money, establishing a strong army, exactly what are you plotting? I guess that's what he meant to ask. When I think about it now, I'm quite surprised. Be it Earl Sagittaria or someone else, they would want to take precautions.

"My only aim is to give the local people a peace of mind and a better life. To put it more finely, I want to provide a stable livelihood for them in the fief and give them a secure place to live in. That kind of target… No, it is more proper to call it an ideal. And how close I can get to achieve that ideal. However, this is something one must pursue for eternity… Thus, a 'goal' does not exist."

"I see… I am exceedingly impressed. A government for the people… Even though you are still young, it seems you are already a public servant. However, please be careful. Because the remarks my lady made today, 'a country for the people,' might be perceived 'baring your fangs.'"

"I am thankful for your advice."

I have no intention of raising a revolt against the country. As a person of the Duke of Armelia's House, I have more or less swore my allegiance to royal family.

However, I still believe that I should defend the people. Therefore, depending on the situation, the possibility of confronting the country still exist. On a final note, that last thing I said is a card I definitely do not want to play if given a choice. …Nevertheless, I cannot say it out loud.

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Common Sense of a Duke’s Daughter - Chapter 44

Evening Party II

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“Prince Alfred was trying to assess your ability as well. I have to admit, some of the Armelia House’s policies seem useful for the country.”

“Oh… Prince Alfred was?”

“…You don’t seem too surprised.”

“I was told prior that he was working in this country. Furthermore, since factions are beginning to form here and there, wouldn’t it be natural for them to be in contact with the head?”

In reality it seems like the people who have assembled here are quite independent on their own, but there are some interesting characters here and there. By collecting everyone here, the real mastermind probably planned on banding everyone together. Of course by gathering everyone here, it’d be especially difficult to summon a representative over the real.

“In addition, if that person has large supporters among the participants, there’s no doubt that the story of my fief has been told as well. ”

After all, the Minister of Finance, Earl Sagittaria, and a large number of other rather important bureaucrats are assembled here. If he was able to make them accompany him, it’s not hard to deduce that they’re here for political reasons.

“If he is truly observing my house’s fief, then I am honored. However, I cannot say for sure that my territory is up to his standards”

The success of my fief, and my ability to push forward my plans was largely attributed to my status. Had I not been the Lord of my territory, there would’ve been a doubt that I’d been able to succeed so much. The power of a Landlord in this country is very high, if for example the country attempted to move as a singular being, chances are the time between the negotiations and movement would be taxing.

“I’m confident that he would be able to change the existing order to reunify this country.”

As if understanding my true intentions, Earl Sagittaria laughed lightly.

(私の意図を読み取ってか、サジタリア様は笑って言った)

But what he said stuck with me. To change existing order and reunify the people? I glanced at Earl Sagittaria who was grinning. It was as if he was trying to read into my true intentions.

Like I thought earlier, the power of one lord is too great. Basically a single territory is more like a state, and the collection of said states is named a country. For that reason legislation and taxation is somewhat regulated by the country, but as long as the state

doesn’t violate preset laws they can do anything. I also attribute my success to these allowances. The one exception to these understandings is, of course the capital, which is under direct control of the king.

So then, let’s assume that someone were to change these understandings. Wouldn’t that lead to the rise and strengthening of the royalty? Removing power from the Houses and giving them back to the Royalty, It seems more feasible and quite possible to unify the country. But there’s also no doubt that there will be opposition to that idea. Is this truly possible?

Even so it bewilders me that Earl Sagittaria would discuss such matters with me. Even If I had decided to attend this party, there’s no guarantee that I would side with the First Prince’s Faction

With that in mind, I rethought the conversation I had moments ago.

“In the end, what’re you aiming at?”

Could it be that the previous conversation was tied into this one? If it were possible to, indeed unify the country through reorganization of power, was it to inquire, what would I do? I wonder if that’s what he wants to know. Would I rebel and secede.. Or would I follow and obey? Instead of father, he wanted to know what I, the substitute Landlord, thought.

“I have not been able to understand what kind of person he is, so, as of this moment, I cannot decide. Therefore I will try to observe. However, even if he’s able to succeed… even if its for the nation’s purpose, I will in no means be overjoyed”

I cannot say anything as I have yet to meet Prince Alfred in person, so this is my true opinion. I cannot say with certainty that I would be willing to follow.

“Of course. Very interesting. Anyways I’ll look forward to the day where you stand by him”

“Surely you jest. It is terrifying to imagine standing by him”

“My apologies, I took a joke too far”

With that, I parted with Earl Sagittaria. My eyes followed him as he went and gave his greetings to several people, and after that was done, he took a small break.

While watching the Earl, I was surprised. Even though I only had a conversation with the Earl, I was exhausted.

While I was wondering such things, the host of today’s party, Baron Messi had appeared by my side.

“How do you find today’s event?”

“I’ve been finding it very enjoyable”

I said in a smile. If I let my guard down, my exhaustion would appear on my face”

“Ah.. That reminds me Baron Messi, may I ask you a question”?

“What is it?”

“Why is it that you wish to return to your territory so soon? Everyone that’s here– excluding the bureaucrats from the imperial castle, stay till the end of the season don’t they?”

(「何故、貴方は領地に早くお帰りに？ここにいる皆様方…王城で官僚をされている方を除いて…シーズン中は皆様王都に残られると仰ってました。てっきり、皆様方ももうお帰りになられるかと思っていましたので……」)

I thought I had inquired too much, and much to my surprise Baron Messi started talking.

“That is because it was a task entrusted to me”

“A task is it?”

“Yes. Has Miss Iris been told by Gazelle about the Towair military campaign?”

“I have of course heard of it. Though, I have to admit my knowledge is limited to what I’ve read”

“That should suffice. As Miss has probably been told, I once fought under Gazelle in the Towair campaign.And because of that campaign, my achievements were awarded with a peerage.”

Baron Messi looked as if he was remembering a far away place.

“I am nothing more than a soldier, even with the change in my status, nothing about me changes. And since we have yet to reach an armistice or a conclusion with Towair, I cannot leave my territory open for too long.”

His reason is understandable; however, something gets caught on my mind. Earl Monroe who governs over the same territory as Baron Messi once reasoned it was because he was a “Military Man”. Its no doubt that he would be more cautious to such things. But I can’t help but to feel that its too rushed. Coming to the capital barely before the start of the Foundation Day holidays, and leaving soon after, almost seems as if there’s still a threat of an outbreak of war.

“Even now I see us in the middle of a war, I cannot as a man tell Miss that we will be okay, I cannot tell Miss to not be worried. And so I hope you stay wary… That is all I can say. I cannot predict whether the opposing side would come attack us now or later, all I can say is that they are for sure aiming at us.”

“For our resources, wealth, and food I see.”

“Yes, as well as the hatred left over from the war 30 years ago”

War.. I cannot consider the distance between Amelia and Towair to be my reason to let my guard down. And once the war does start, the burden put on everyone will be hard.

“Thank you very much for the warning”

“Not a problem. I apologize for bring up such a terrible topic while here. I shall excuse myself now.”

“Not a worry, It was very informative”

Common Sense of a Duke’s Daughter - Chapter 45

er 45 (edited)

Report and Anxiety

(╬⓪益⓪)

Azura>Azuta because アズータ is not Azura.

editor note: if you need to be told who's saying what you need to git gud
rekt #360nocscope

After that my limits were exceeded, and I decided to return home. Considering I had conversations with many individuals whom I hadn't spoken with as of yet, I think the outcome was quite good. I slept quite well that day—And now all that was left for me was to give my greetings to Father.

"–…Iris-sama."

Tanya called for me while I was working on some papers.

"What happened, Tanya?"

"I have two things to report."

"What is it?"

"First about Miss Yuri."

Hearing those words I stopped my hands, and looked straight at Tanya.

"I conducted an investigation on her. Although the investigation is still ongoing, I believe I have discovered information that requires urgent notice, and therefore felt I should tell you as soon as possible."

"Alright. What have you discovered?"

"First, of her upbringing. We found that her birth mother did not serve solely under Baron Noir's House."

"Oh really? I was convinced that she was simply having an affair with her master. If that wasn't it, did you figure out her actual origin?"

"The Royal Castle."

"The Royal Castle… What did she do there?"

"She worked as a maid in the castle. We don't know when and where she became acquainted with Baron Noir, but the same time she resigned, she entered the Baron's household."

"So they met at the castle… It's rather likely considering how often the Baron drops by."

There's a possibility that they had met at the castle. But is there a possibility that that would bring them together? I can't say anything now considering they are presently together.

"After talking to her previous co-workers, it seems that them being seen together

happened rather frequently and was well-known.”

As expected of the heroine’s mother. Though the Baron’s daughter seems to just have the name of the heroine and have no other redeeming qualities besides being cute.

“Unfortunately, finding information after their separation is difficult. It is not hard to find stories when she was alive, but finding information from after they parted is giving me some trouble.”

“A single woman… Furthermore it was difficult to find witnesses of a daughter who seems to stand out so easily…Okay… Anything else?”

“A person who lived in the area once remarked that it must have been difficult to raise a daughter alone. He even asked if there was anyone she could rely on, and she apparently replied with ‘No there isn’t’. Though oddly enough it seems that after she died, a person calling themselves a relative of her daughter’s came forward”. (Tanya

“Was that individual Baron Noir?”

“It isn’t certain.”

“Do we know of his appearance?”

“I asked after his features, but received the reply ‘I do not recall’. However, he did seem to remember that it was a man.”

“Hm…”

Even though she didn’t have anyone to depend on, a relative came forward? Furthermore, right after her death? I can only think of two possibilities.

The first possibility would be that for some reason she had to cut ties. Because of that reason, she couldn’t rely on the main house, and only after she died would Yuri be taken into custody by Baron Noir. If this theory is true, I’d like to figure out where she lived during that time.

If its not that, the second theory would be that Baron Noir was traveling incognito or that he had sent someone out to retrieve her. This theory holds the highest probability, but if that were indeed true it’d raise some other questions. Like why did he hide Yuri’s existence for so long?

Either or, both hold suspicion.

“Also, how did Baron Noir prove that Yuri was indeed his daughter? There shouldn’t have been any proof right?”

“It seems that he was able to recognize her through the pendant she obtained from her mother. Not to mention, she seemed to have two things that largely related her to her mother?”

Unfortunately, DNA identification nor any other scientific methods exist in this era, so physical proof is unavoidable. It’s not like you can mask your identity as someone else either, so just having them look identical would be another point.

“Even so to have searched for more than 10 years… She must have meant a lot to Baron Noir.”

“The reason for that is uncertain as well. We plan on continuing the investigation to find out more. With that, the report on Baron Yuri’s mistress has concluded.”

“Is that so. I’ll entrust any further operations to you. And the second report?”

“Yes. The second report is about Earl Monroe, who you requested we investigate beforehand.”

“Oh… Right.”

When I previously met Earl Monroe during the opening of a Azuta Conglomerate store, he piqued my interest. I requested that she look into the story he told me during our tea party and any information about the boy following him.

“The boy tailing Earl Monroe that day was Deuban, it seems that he’s been treated as a guest by Earl Monroe and is constantly traveling with him. He was even at the Azuta invitational.”

“A guest.. Do we know who or where he’s from?”

“He seems to be the president of the Aira conglomerate. The Aira conglomerate does indeed exist in the Merchant Guild’s logs, and it seems they mostly deal in food resources. What type of food resources was not included, however.”

“It can’t be helped that we could not find information about their patrons. But for the Earl to be so close to such an individual…Is the reason their influence is on the rise because of that conglomerate?”

“Quite possibly.”

I can’t think of any other possibility. Given that that region is a grain producing area, and the Aira Conglomerate deals in food resources, Earl Monroe is probably selling his land’s harvests. But if that were to be true who are they selling that grain to?

“Tanya, could you find out more about that boy Deuban? Also investigate the Aira Conglomerate, especially information as to where they’re selling it to and how much”. (Iris)

“Understood”. (Tanya)

I have a bad feeling about this. Given yesterday’s party, the state of things seems to be taking a turn for the worse. I didn’t worry about it too much when I was governing my fief, but after coming to the capital I finally realized that I’ve been roped in as well.

I want to go back to my territory, but I also feel that I shouldn’t leave this problem alone. I can’t help but feel that somewhere there’s something brewing without my knowledge of it.

Common Sense of a Duke’s Daughter - Chapter 46

DD – Chapter 46

Side Story : Shortly before the evening party

“Why do we have to attend too…”

While I muttered, Ryle creased his eyebrows.

“There’s nothing we can do about it Dida, Master even requested that we attend.”

“Even still, doesn’t our training today have nothing to do with us?”

Today’s training was a mock battle against the Military and the Chivalric Order. A representative from each side would be chosen and pitted against each other in a match. It was usually something that has no relation to us, but Master Gazelle requested that we participate. In reality, I wanted to tag along with our princess to the evening party. Especially since its Baron Messi’s party, there would’ve been no worry of having to use formal language, and no danger to the princess since we sent out our specially trained guards. In the worst case scenario, Tanya’s there as well. I’m sure that I’m not the only one as of recent who’s been wondering where Tanya’s been off to.

Anyways, if I were given the choice between staying here with a bunch of sweaty people or going to the party, I’d choose the latter.

“It’s irrelevant to the present, but this is a good time to gauge the difference in strength between the Chivalric Order and the army. Make sure you properly observe.”

“I’m okay with that… But was there really a need for us to be here? In a place that makes us feel so uncomfortable.**”

Today’s exercise is used to relieve a bit of pressure between the Order and Army. The Army is adamant in thinking that the Order are a bunch of spoiled brats who have no real experience, while the Order is equally convinced that the Army is all brawn and no brains. In my opinion both sides are rather equal. But for that reason, we use a mock battle to exchange ideas.

Most of this mock battle is thanks to Master though. Speaking of Master, he probably wanted to go to Baron Messi’s party considering that he was once one of his trusted men. But he probably understood that he must deal with the weird tension that rises between the Order and the Army. Unfortunately, since Baron Messi understands that he has a duty to fulfill and cannot stay much longer in the capital, today was the only day the party could be held. I understand the trouble it puts Master in, but I’d wish he didn’t include us.

Furthermore, just observe the match? That’s boring as all hell.

When I glanced over at the Princess’ practice grounds, I saw that the Order and the Army were all ready to go. I scanned across the field and happened to glance Master.

“Yo, you guys came too huh.”

Master walked up behind us. Upon hearing his voice, everyone turned towards him. As expected of Master.

“Ah.. General Gazelle, excuse my rudeness, these two are?”

“These two are my apprentices. They happened to be at the capital so I called them over.”

“General Gazelle’s apprentices…”

Hearing Master’s words, the atmosphere around us changed. Seems like they’re trying to challenge—no, ascertain our abilities. As expected of Master’s popularity. Well… We’re probably being stared at because there aren’t too many who can withstand Gazelle’s lessons, nor have any chance to anyways.

“Well shall we begin, Knight Captain?”

“We’re ready whenever, General Gazelle.”

The Knight Captain… If I remember correctly his name is Doreina Kataberia, his son should’ve been in the same class as the princess.

Anyways, after that the 1v1 matches began. One after another, nothing but elites were sent out making the matches really entertaining. Both parties were also relatively evenly matched. However, a select few from the Order side were surprised by the ferocity of the Army.

After 4 matches, the finale was about to begin. From the Order’s side came the Knight Captain’s son, and from the Army’s side a single person came out.

“Wait just a second!”

In the midst of all the cheering, Master shouted out.

“How about we try a 2v2 for this match?”

“A 2v2?”

Everyone was confused by Master’s remark.

“That’s right! We’ll have you guys form a pair and fight against my apprentices!”

I was surprised by his sudden exclamation. I stood there gawking while Ryle, who was next to me, who had either expected it or just given up, stood there emotionless.

“General Gazelle’s apprentices… That seems interesting.”

Unexpectedly, the army’s representative quickly accepted the challenge. Wait, wait, wasn’t this mock battle supposed to be so that the Army and the Order could dispel their misunderstandings? Aren’t both sides currently at 2 wins and 2 losses? The crowd too raised a roar signalling their agreement to the challenge.

As I glanced at the Knight Captain’s son, he was also nodding in agreement. Ah… Well, there’s nothing I can do about this situation anymore.

“We’re going, Dida.”

“Okay.”

Ryle stood up quietly and slowly made his way to the stadium. Sighing, I followed.

Common Sense of a Duke’s Daughter - Chapter 47

DD – Chapter 47

Dorsen’s Reflection

My name is Dorsen Katabelia. I am the son of Druna Katabelia, the current Knight Captain. Since I was young, my father gave me lessons on martial arts. He told me that since I’d be protecting the royal family some day I’d need it. I took pride in those words. Whenever we began lessons, I worked as hard as I could. I was so committed to my martial arts studies that when I had to join the academy, I saw it more as a bother than a beneficial experience. I’d have rather stayed home and studied under the active-duty knights than go to school and learn. But since I was to be the heir, I had no choice but to go.

Since I was rather quiet to begin with, I had a great deal of trouble blending in. I often thought that it was useless to go to the academy after all. Then one day, I met a rather peculiar girl. She introduced herself as Yuri Noir, the daughter of Baron Noir. I met her while I was practicing alone at the training grounds. Since not many people use the training grounds at the academy, I found myself coming here every day to raise my skills.

“Impressive-”

That was the first thing she said to me.

“…What is?”

“Ah, my apologies. I come here almost every day, and see you come here every day. I always wondered what you were doing.”

“The back of the building?”

If I remember correctly, the back of the building has a flower field. But since no one ever goes there there should be a lot of weeds.

“Yes. The flower field. Since its no one uses it, I figured I’d grow some flowers. Of course, I’ve gotten permission from the academy, though.”

“Don’t look so surprised. I won’t go reporting to the school anyways.”

“Ah… I hadn’t thought about that possibility. No, that’s not what I intended. I meant that it’s pretty weird for a lady to be messing around in the dirt right? That’s why I’d be happy if you didn’t spread that around too much”

“It’s not like you’re being a nuisance to others right? I won’t say anything about it.”

“That’s great. And so what are you doing everyday?”

“Can’t you tell?”

“I can see that you’re training…but I can’t see for what reason. Considering that you’re already taking a Military Martial Arts class, it’s weird.”

Military Martial Arts is considered an elective class, and a lot of people with an affiliation to the Order take it. If not, it could be people who want to learn self-defense, or sons who have no chance of inheritance and therefore need to join the Order.

“I’m not training to supplement my classes.”

“Is that so?”

“Yes. As a matter of fact, I’ve been training so I can offer my services to the royalty.”

The girl, who had been blank-faced before, giggled.

“That’s a lovely ideal. If I was protected by someone with such strong ideals, I would have no worries.”

I’d remember that smile and laugh for a while.. After that occurrence, she began to sometimes drop in and watch me practice. Since I’d be training, our conversations were rather frank. At first I ignored her presence, but after a while I began to look forward to the time she’d appear. She commonly praised what I thought was the norm, and said that it was amazing or impressive. Those very words became my motivation and my training eventually picked up pace. I also began to think that my sword was not only for the royal family’s but that it would also be for her.

By the time I realized I fell for her, she had become engaged to the Edward, the second prince. I felt dejected at first, but I still felt that I needed to protect her. I kept these feelings, and eventually contradictions between my belief and fate began to appear. When I noticed these changes, I calmed down a bit and pledged that I’d protect her to the best of my ability.

So when Prince Edward and Lady Yuri were pitted against Duke Armelia’s daughter, I sided with Lady Yuri. After we successfully exiled Lady Iris, I felt as if I had successfully protected Lady Yuri.

“How could you have done such a thing!”

I had been called out by father. As I was wondering what he was talking about, Father sighed heavily.

“I’m talking about the case with Duke Armelia’s daughter!”

“…I can’t understand what I have done to deserve being yelled at so much.”

“Is that your real response?”

“Yes.”

“It is impossible for us to even raise our hands against dukes, but it should be more impossible to raise a hand against a woman. Are you no longer taking the Knight’s Code to heart?”

“So? Duke Armelia’s daughter was teasing Lady Yuri.”

“Did you see her tease Yuri?”

“N-No I did not… But to call it a groundless rumour…”

“Did you witness that exact scene? Did you happen to hear it happening?”

“N-no…”

“You disgust me! You had no evidence whatsoever but you proceeded to raise your hand

against a woman. Even more so since it was against the second prince's fiance. You're a disgrace to the knights. You have sullied our household, and furthermore you have sullied the honor of a knight."

"But I was…"

"I'm not listening to your excuses. Go cool your head off in penitence!"

I, who couldn't say anything in response, was led by a butler to a locked room. After that I took some time off of school in repentance. I was forbidden from training, and I spent my days idling in my room.

I couldn't understand why I was treated this way. I had just wanted to protect her. But my father's "You have sullied the Knight's Code" kept spinning through my thoughts.

While I was pondering, I was called out by my mother.

"It has been a long time, Dorsen."

I recalled that it had been a long time since I last had a discussion with mother. As of late, I had spent even my weekends at the Academy, but since my house arrest I had stayed in my room.

"It has been a while."

In front of me was a can of tea and a mountain of never before seen brown teacakes.

"That's called chocolate. It has gotten rather popular in the capital as of late. Have a taste."

On mother's recommendation, I put one in my mouth. It was delicious. It was sweet and a bit bitter, a really sophisticated taste.

"A conglomerate run by the Armelia Household began selling it."

"The Armelia Household…"

"Rumor has it Iris was the one who invented it."

Mother frowned as she murmured Lady Iris' name.

"Hey, Dorsen. Can you truly say you did the right thing?"

"The right thing?"

"Yes. To be honest, what you did was a really big problem given our house's standing, but putting that aside, do you really think you did the right thing?"

I couldn't understand Mother's true motive. I thought I did the right thing. While I was under house arrest, I reconsidered Father's words. Father probably wanted me to realize that as a future representative of the Katabelia House, I had to consider my social standings first and foremost. If it's like that, I have no reason to be ashamed of my actions. If I was able to protect her, my family didn't matter.

"You know, Dorsen. This is a bit rude to say, but I'd have to side with Lady Iris. "

"For what reason, Mother?"

"Considering Lady Yuri courted a man with a fiancee, and that man ended up stolen away, I'd say Lady Iris' harassment was not uncalled for. A woman who loves her fiance had her

fiance seduced by another woman. It wasn't unjustified for Lady Iris to channel all her jealousy and hate at Lady Yuri."

"That is.."

"The man she loved was stolen. She was even exiled from society because you guys confronted her in front of everyone."

I recalled her last words at the Academy. Tears streaming down her face, she said "What more do you guys plan on taking from me? First my fiance and then my position…"

"I see these teacakes as her resolution. The resolution to live alone, to make it through society without having to rely on marriage. Considering she was banished from society and her engagement was annulled, finding another engagement would be nearly impossible. Dorsen, you.. You raised your hand against that girl, supported a conspiracy, and on top that looked down upon her… Do you think that's correct as a knight?"

"That is.."

I couldn't even object. I hadn't thought about it. I hadn't seen that she'd be in pain, that she'd be depressed… I hadn't considered those obvious things.

"I understand you wanted to protect the girl you liked. But did you really hone your skills for that reason alone? Did you feel fulfillment when you raised your hand against such a girl?"

Mother's words stabbed my heart even more. I began to think she was right, but there's also no going back.

"I can't say too much since I'm not a knight, but I can say for sure what you did to Lady Iris is the same exact thing as pure violence."

When I was lectured by father, all I could feel was contempt. But now I felt pangs of confusion and regret.

"You should reflect on your actions more."

After conversing with mother, she permitted my return to the Academy saying too many absences were bad. I attended my classes as usual, and I once again returned to the training grounds. I wanted to clear my mind after listening to mother. Maybe I wanted to run away from the truth mother had revealed to me, or Lady Iris' words. I wasn't sure which. I graduated from school while avoiding meeting Lady Yuri or Prince Edward.

After graduation, as planned, I joined the Order. I continued my life learning under my seniors.

Then one day, a mock battle with the Army was announced. I was confused as to why I was invited. I agreed to the invitation since it'd be a great opportunity anyways.

There, General Gazelle appeared. Although being affiliated with the Army, General Gazelle is well respected in the Order as well. Beside him were his apprentices. Upon hearing that those two were his apprentices, the Army and Order began to buzz. To be honest, even if one wanted to be taught directly by General Gazelle, it was impossible. His popularity made it impossible to find students.

After being introduced to the three, the matches began. The crowd seemed to get more excited with every match. Eventually we came down to 2 wins and 2 losses. Next would be my turn. Expecting it, I stood up. In front of me was one guy from the Army Corps. As the time ticked down to the start of the match, General Gazelle declared that we should fight his two apprentices instead.

Interesting… I thought. To fight against my idol's apprentices… I was excited to see how skilled they are. I was excited to see how much I'd grown.

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DD – Chapter 48

The Outcome

“…Round start!”

At the referee’s shout, I swung my sword at the man named Ryle with all my strength. I glanced over and saw my original opponent doing the same. It seems like we both came to the conclusion that we’d have no chance of winning if we fought them together.

Ryle deflected my attack with his sword. The clang of metal on metal reverberated across the arena. From then on, no matter how hard I tried to overpower him, he didn’t move an inch. Seeing him so unruffled, taking my swings as if they were nothing, ticked me off.

If this continues, I won’t be able to land a hit.
Considering my options, I took a step back and tried to attack from a different angle. As I began to attack again, my sword was repelled, and this time I was pushed back by a torrent of blows. Each and every blow was heavy, and it was all I could do to protect myself.

“…kuh.”

I tried looking for a hole, a place to break through, but couldn’t find anything resembling an opening. Being one-sidedly attacked, I couldn’t even muster an attack. …It’s been a long time since I’ve been forced into a corner. Given my upbringing, I’ve never lost to my colleagues. When I joined the Order, I worked hard and won. Even still… In this situation, I can only defend. My opponent is calm and composed. I can’t see the possibility of me winning this fight. To be honest, I’m astonished by the difference in skill between us.

Clang

In my periphery, a sword flew through the air. It seems like the match between the army guy and Dida has concluded. The winner is Dida. At the same time, Ryle’s swings became stronger and stronger. As I thought, he had been taking it easy on me. The
blows continued until eventually, I too was disarmed.

I lost… I tried to surrender, but Ryle kept swinging his sword.

“Wha-..”

Normally, if your opponent loses your sword, you’d pull back. All I could do was dodge, I couldn’t even murmur what I thought. Given the strength of his blows, the speed at which he swung his sword was astonishing.

“Stop! The match is over!”

Ryle stopped his sword upon hearing the referee. His sword was inches away from my neck, I was barely saved by the ref.

“……..”

Ryle pulled his sword back with a look of disappointment. I let out a sigh of relief.

“…Why aren’t you two affiliated with either the Army or the Order?”

I relaxed, not having wanted to confront the last attack. Instead, I asked them something

that has been on my mind. If it were them, I'm sure both organizations would welcome them, but I've never heard of nor seen them before.

"We have someone who we must serve."

"But… With that level of strength…"

"So what? I never even once thought of serving the royal family. As long as I protect the princess, I'm fine."

"…Dida, you… You don't need to say such a thing here."

Ryle sighed at Dida's outburst.

"But Ryle, aren't you the same? What has the country done for us? The one who saved us was the princess."

"That is true."

"That's why. We have no intention of joining the Army nor the Order."

After that remark, both Ryle and Dida left the arena. General Gazelle took their place in the arena and stood in front of the Army and the Order.

"You've done well, all of you. Let's set the pleasantries aside for today and have a drink."

With that final speech, the mock battles had ended.

While the arena was getting lively again, I figured I'd go wash off my sweat, so I headed to the nearby watering grounds.

"Nice work today."

Having been tapped on the shoulder, I turned around to see my senior standing there. Since he was the closest to me in age, he frequently helped me out.

"That fight earlier was impressive."

"Not even. I didn't even come close to being on par with them."

"Well that's a given. If they were to fight someone on equal grounds with them there'd probably be only General Gazelle on the army's side, while on the Order's side there'd Captain Malcolm."

Captain Malcolm was the Order's ace. If General Gazelle's apprentices could fight on par with him, it'd be an amazing feat.

"I truly wonder why those two won't come to the capital. I'm sure that both the Order and the Army would welcome them with open arms".

"They explained earlier."

"Even still…"

"When you suddenly questioned them, I was terrified. If you had continued, there's no doubt that they have drawn their swords on you."

"You're kidding, right…"

I glanced at my senior hoping he was joking, but I could only see him grimacing.

“Just like you, both the Army and the Order tried to scout them a while back, but we were firmly refused. We came on too hard, and there was duel. They said that their master had been insulted by the scout. They won.”

I was dumbfounded. True, if your master was insulted as a knight you had the right to challenge them to a duel, but I’ve never heard of it actually happening before. I could only imagine them as mad dogs, protecting their master at all costs and barring their fangs at anyone who crosses them. But to have someone that can control such a beast, just who could their master be?

“…That fight was worse. They weren’t playing around like they were today, and had General Gazelle not stopped them, the scout would’ve lost his life.”

“It was that bad, huh…”

“Yeah. They don’t follow the Order’s code, nor do they fit the Army’s ferocity, seemingly adapting to the situation. Dida’s movements were too fast to perceive, while Ryle’s attacks were too strong to guard against. That fight was unforgettable. That reminds me, you were also saved from Ryle’s blows towards the end as well.”

“Why?”

“The master of those two is none other than Duke Armelia’s daughter, Iris. I feel sympathy for your terrible luck. It’s highly likely that General Gazelle knew beforehand that the results of the competition were likely to disturb the balance between the two organizations. That’s why the two would step in to ensure that neither party would win. In the worst case scenario they probably decided to allow our two versus their two to defuse any bad situations. After the score ended up being 2 wins and 2 losses, they appeared. And when they did I figured since it was your turn next, they’d be taking revenge for what happened at the academy. I was seriously worried about you for a second.”

“That is..”.

Their master was Duke Armelia’s daughter Iris… Hearing the identity of their master, I was assaulted with a wave of emotions. Surely it was a joke that she was leading them, that she was the one they were attached to…

“That’s why I said you did great coming back alive.”

I now feel that way too. It was good that today was only a mock battle. It was good that I fought Ryle over Dida, or else I might’ve not been standing here right now. I felt a chill creep down my back.

“….Senpai.”

“What is it?”

“What do you think of Duchess Iris?”

“Don’t look for an answer from me. After all, I’ve yet to talk to or even meet her.”

I felt those words pierce my heart. Before that event even occurred, I recalled that I never spoke to her once.

“But you know… seeing how those two act, I can only say that it seems like she’s a big-hearted person.”

“……That is a good point…”

Common Sense of a Duke’s Daughter - Chapter 49

DD – c49

Complicated Feelings

“Sorry, I seem to have drunk too much.”

I thought Grandfather would be the only one in this morning, but Ryle and Dida were also in. Grandfather tends to be rather zealous sometimes, so the two being brought with him as escorts can’t be helped.

“Tanya, can you make sure these two get plenty of water?”

“Certainly.”

Whilst directing a request to Tanya who had been standing at my side, I sit down in the seat opposite from Grandfather.

“Grandfather, even if it’s you, drinking too much will be bad for your health. Shouldn’t you lessen the amount of alcohol that you drink?”

“Kuh…”

Grandfather grimaced… He does love alcohol after all.

“And so, how much did you drink last night?”

“I was drinking with the guys from the Order and the Army. So…. I may have had too much fun and decided it wasn’t enough, so I took these two and went out drinking.”

“Geez..”

The cause of this is that last decision. Since long ago, Grandfather would take the two out to drink, trying to teach them their limits, but the two would come back unconscious every time. Grandfather has taken a liking to the the two so he sometimes ends up forcing drink after drink on them.

“…Please excuse the interruption.”

“Oh. Tanya, what is it?”

“Rudeus-sama has come to pick up Sir Gazelle.”

“…What!”

Grandfather suddenly panicked. Since Grandfather rarely shows that side of him, I laughed.

“Tell him I’m not here.”

“…But…”

As Tanya was thinking about how to pass that information to Rudeus, he appeared from behind her.

“So Grandfather… I’ve heard that you drank a store dry again.”

“No, that’s…”

“How many times do I have to tell you to please restrain yourself? You’re a very influential person in this country. It may be peaceful now, but if you were suddenly attacked while you were unconscious, there will be nothing we can do. I beg for you to drink less outside!”

Hearing Rudeus’ argument, it seemed like Grandfather’s shoulders shrunk smaller and smaller. Rudeus is my mother’s brother’s son.. Basically he’s my cousin, the head of household and heir to be of the Anderson House. Incidentally, Marquis Anderson says frequently that since he’s weaker than Grandfather he doesn’t want to be affiliated with the Order or the Army. Similarly, Rudeus isn’t affiliated with either and is simply studying to be the successor. Though I don’t know what he’s studying in particular… As one would expect, he is Grandfather’s grandson. His athletic ability is similar to that of Ryle or Dida, and his physique is slender but well built.

“It’s been a long time, Rudi.”

“It has been a while, Iris. Ah, sorry. Although it’s a long-awaited reunion, we meet because of this kind of reason.”

I’m 2 years older than him, so we met during one year at the Academy. But since we were in different years, meeting him was difficult, and near the end I was also banished from the Academy.

“It’s fine. I was also telling Grandfather that he should drink less.”

“Is that so? I’m thankful that Iris is telling Grandfather the same thing. Grandfather won’t listen to what I say, but surely he’d listen to you.”

“Surely that’s not true. Oh, would you like to have some tea as well?”

“I’d love to accept such a rare opportunity, but I have something to do afterwards. Alright then Grandfather, time to go home.”

“Ugh..”

“Grandfather, thank you for bringing Ryle and Dida home. You should also go home and rest your body.”

“Can’t I stay here?”

While creasing his eyebrows, Grandfather pleaded.

“What’re you saying? We’re going home now.”

Rudeus shot down Grandfather’s plea. As I thought the conversation between them is amusing.

“Iris, let’s have a proper conversation next time.”

With that, Rudeus pulled Grandfather out of the room. I thought to myself, where does Rudeus hide that sort of strength.

Like a tornado that passed, the surrounding got extremely quiet.

“… Tanya, could I get one more cup?”

“Certainly.”

As I was planning to take a bit of a longer break, Berne walked into the room.

“Could I perhaps join in too?”

“Of course. Sit over there.”

Upon my words, my excellent maid, Tanya, places a cup of tea in front of Berne.

“It’s been a while since we’ve had a conversation like this.”

The last time we met was when the Foundation Day party was held, and even then I didn’t talk to him. I had my own duties to attend to while Berne was following father around doing work.

“Yes… that is right.”

Berne nodded in affirmation, and drank some tea. The tea fit his palette and his expression relaxed.

“I thought that you’d be going back to your fief soon.”

“Yes. I’ve already been away from my fief for a long time, it’s probably about time I should head back. …So, how have you been, Berne?”

“….I’ve learned a lot working under Father. I need to recover the time I’ve been wasting up until now.”

“It’s not like you’ve been playing around so I think it’s fine, isn’t it? And since it is something unique like academy life, I don’t think it’s too bad.”

I reminisced my previous life. If I remember correctly, school life is one of the vital moments. You don’t realize it until you enter the work force. You work with, study with, fight with people of the same age…You sometimes have bitter moments, but in the end it’s enjoyable. In my opinion, the time when you finally understand the joys of youth is a bit after you finish your school life.

“…But I’ve stolen that precious time from you.”

“…?”

I couldn’t hear Berne as his voice got quieter. His facial expression changed so I understood it was about something bad.

“… Nee-san. I have something I need to apologize for.”

“I was thinking about what you were going to say, but what exactly are you apologizing for?”

Even if I didn’t ask what the reason was, I could see that he was talking about my banishment from the academy.

“… The banishment from the academy.”

I asked the question anyways since I wanted to know his motive.

“You don’t need to apologize for that. It was my fault that I was stubborn. So it was my mistake, not yours.”

“You said that last time too. But I don’t think what you said is correct. At that time I was

moving solely based on wanting to be loved by her. Working off of just my emotions lead to where we are now."

"So what you wanted to show me was that you're aiming for the position of Prime Minister, and this apology was to show your resolution for it?"

I interpreted his apology as, "I won't be swayed by my emotions anymore". He came to that understanding while working under Father most likely.

"That is one reason, but it's not only that."

"…What else is there?"

"When I was attracted to her, I moved on nothing else but emotion, similarly, I acted condescendingly to you who acted on her own emotions. You also have a heart of your own, and I failed to understand that your heart must have also been scarred. Knowing that, I'd like to apologize as a family member."

"…."

I had no words regarding Berne's reason. I felt a bit cross that he noticed now, but I also felt a bit glad.

Ever since that ending, I couldn't see Berne as a family member. During that time, during that moment, Berne had chosen Yuri over me.

In my previous life, I thought that siding with the girl you liked was obvious, but at the time my self as Iris was yelling, "Why… Why! Why do you not understand. I just loved him so much. Even you Berne, why would you throw me aside?". I can understand my feelings more than I can understand myself. I sympathized with the yelling inside of me.

To be honest, I didn't care so much about Dorsen or Van because they were less involved. But I felt different towards Prince Edward and Berne. Since I was engaged to Edward, I felt attached to him. As for Berne, he was my precious family member. And so when the two sided with her, I felt shocked that I had been tossed away so easily. Furthermore I was disgraced even further by the two.

I was denounced in front of a great number of people. It was good that my memories of my previous life resurfaced then, but if that had not occurred I may have fallen into a state of panic. Then and there, I also swore that I would never fall in love again, and on top of that I would never fully trust people. I was even thrown away by someone I considered family. The event that turned me into who I am made it so that I couldn't simply forgive him.

The cold part of myself couldn't help but think "It's too late now", but the other side of me wanted to forgive him.

"…I accept your apology; however, I cannot forgive you just yet."

If it was her… If it was Yuri, would she have forgiven him right away? A useless thought surged through me.

"That is enough for me."

With that, Berne took my apology as is.

Common Sense of a Duke’s Daughter - Chapter 50

ED: I’m slow.

Translated by jynkitl.wordpress.com

Father’s Advice

…Well, I guess it’s about time to leave.

Translated by jynkitl.wordpress.com

Thinking that, I headed towards Father’s room. I knocked on the door, and walked in.

“Excuse me, Father.”

Father stared at me from beyond the wall of papers. Though I spoke to him once after I was banished from the Academy, that conversation feels like it was forever ago.

“You’re heading home?”

“Yes. I plan on returning to the fief tomorrow.”

“Is that so.”

Father placed down his pen on the table. He then gestured towards the seat that was placed in front of the study room table.

“If you’ll excuse me.”

I obeyed and sat down.

“I have one thing that I want to warn you about.”

Upon hearing Father’s strict tone, my posture corrected itself. It feels as if this conversation is more strict than the last time we faced off.

“What is it?”

“Be careful of Queen Elria and her house… the Marquess Maeria’s household.”

“I understand they’re the head of the 2nd prince’s faction, so I’ll be sure to take extra care.”

“That’s not what I meant. During the Foundation Day party, you proved you protected the crown prince’s back in front of both domestic and foreign powers.”

“So basically, I’ve become a nuisance to Queen Elia and the Maeria Household?”

My engagement to the 2nd prince had been annulled. Because of this, I figured it’d be next to impossible for me to be accepted by their faction. It’s not a question of just my own feelings, but their image becoming worse. If that were the case, I’d be nothing besides a nuisance in the eyes of Queen Elia.

Translated by jynkitl.wordpress.com

“No.. Not just you, the Armelia House too.”

“Oh…”

“By nature, the Armelia household is seen as an annoyance to the Maeria house. Although I’m a comrade of the royalty I’m merely the prime minister, and because Melly is a

favourite of the crown prince and has such an influential voice in high society, we've managed to stand at the top. Even so we've avoided being involved with political affairs for a long time. By doing so we avoided being attacked by the Maeria house again and again. But now…"

"By breaking my engagement with the second prince, I've applied pressure as a daughter of the Armelia house…"

"Precisely. You caused the fief to boom even faster than I could imagine, and even managed to found a conglomerate and turn a profit. You've accomplished too much too quickly. Because of that we've become an existence that cannot be ignored by the Maeria House."

"…My.. My apologies…"

How shameful… Everything going so swimmingly had me simply accepting my good luck and not considering its aftereffects. It was something that I could have seen had I given it even the smallest amount of thought – how annoying my existence was to the Armelia house. I was allowed that position out of the kindness of my father's heart. Yet, to think I simply caused my family more trouble…!

"…No. It's also my fault for not gauging your strengths properly. No need to apologize."

"But still.."

"Fortunately, nothing has happened yet. So, Iris… Take the utmost precaution when moving forward from here on out."

"Yes!"

Hearing my response, Father rang a bell. A maid promptly entered the room.

"Something to drink."

"Absolutely."

Without a moment's delay, a teacup was placed in front of me. I decided to drink it to calm my racing heart.

"This may seem a bit redundant…"

Looking troubled, my father prepared to speak.

"… It's obvious that you have to take precautions around the Maeria house, but you must also at all costs avoid Queen Elria."

"Is that different from what you said earlier?"

"…It appears that Queen Elria betrayed the royal palace."

Father spoke slowly, choosing his words with great thought. What is he saying with such delay..?

"… The disappearance of the real queen-to-be seems to also be related to Queen Elria."

"Father, have you such proof for a theory like that?"

"There was no evidence left. Are you saying that we should try investigating the queen?"

“…It was a slip of tongue.”

If I think about it, in this world where forensic investigation doesn’t exist, finding the answer would be difficult. It’d also be difficult to use physical force on someone with such high influence.

It could be a ploy by the 1st prince, or it could be true. I don’t know who it might be, but the reason for spreading this rumor might be so that people won’t investigate it further.

“Anyway, there’s a rumour like that floating about. Make sure you take heed of what’s happening around you.”

Translated by jynkitl.wordpress.com

“Yes.”

I felt my heart shiver. I don’t want to acknowledge it, but it seems like the opposing side is trying to single out opponents.

“I’ve told Tanya, Ryle, and Dida ahead of time, so you be careful of yourself too.”

“I’ll take Father’s advice to heart.”

I’ve come a long way since my confinement. I know for sure that I don’t want to die yet. Furthermore, if I were to die at this point in time, there’s no doubt I’d cause trouble for my territory’s people. The reform I’m leading right now and the politics surrounding my territory cannot be left aside.

“… In addition, you’ve been looking into Baron Noir’s daughter, Yuri, correct?”

“Ah… Father seems to know everything.”

“Well… So how much do you know?”

“Yuri’s mother was a maid that worked in the royal castle.”

“Alright. …By the way the family that was protecting her was the Reuben house.”

“…The Reuben house?”

I tilted my head in confusion at the name of a house I never heard of before.

“This is the limit of the information I can divulge at this moment.”

Hearing his statement, I gave up on prying more information from him.

“If you look into this, you should be able to discover what’s been going on at the capital. But don’t look too far into it. You’d only be adding more stress to your already severe situation.”

“…Then why has Father…” Translated by jynkitl.wordpress.com

“If your protégé was sniffing around the capital, you’d want to stop it before something happens right? If it’s just a family name you should be able to discover information about it from a book.”

“…Thank you for the information.”

‘Don’t look into it any further‘… huh. Considering our previous conversation, I can’t

simply do what I please anymore. As expected of Father. I have no reason to object.

“Thank you for the time. With this I’ll excuse myself.”

“Ah. Be careful on your way home.”

I almost thought I heard him add “too” to the end of his sentence. True, it’s practically a given that attacking travelers is easier. I should listen well to what Tanya, Ryle, and Dida say on the way home.

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